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HALF HOURS OF VAUDEVILLE

By

GORDAN V. MAY

Author of "Red Acre Farm," "Bar Haven," "At Random Run," "The Great Winterson Mine," "John Brag, Deceased," "The Red Rosette," "The Starry Flag," "By the Enemy's Hands," "The Little Black Devil," "Outwitting the Colonel," "Wanted: A Mahatma," etc.

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BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

1913

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PREFACE

IN arranging an entertainment for club, lodge, church or society, how often does the committee in charge find themselves with a half-hour on their hands, for which no suitable feature has been prepared.

It is for just such occasions that this book has been arranged.

The selections are all up to date, and have been written with the view of pleasing just such audiences.

They can be played in any lodge room, church platform, or even in a parlor; and while simple in construction, give ample opportunity for the display of histrionic talent.



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NOTE

A feature of the Bijou performances of this last sketch was the two songs introduced into this piece—"When I Was Belle of Beacon Street" (sung by Miss Gertrude Breene) and "The Modern Girl" (sung by Miss Betty Barnicoat). Arrangements for the use of these numbers may be made by addressing Mr. Carl Wilmore, B. F. Keith's Bijou Theatre, Washington Street, Boston, Mass.

One Little Shoe

A Dramatic Sketch

CHARACTERS

ARCHIE BALDWIN.

MRS. VALERIE BALDWIN, *his wife.*

SCENE.—*Parlor of the Baldwins' home. An elaborate interior. Music for rise of curtain, "Hot Time in the Old Town To-night."*

(Both enter center door at back, at rise. They are both dressed in evening clothes, and appear very angry. VAL. comes down R., takes off her hat and wrap and angrily flings them over a chair. ARCH. at the same time comes down L., tosses his hat on a chair, and jerks off his gloves and hurls them in a corner.)

VAL. (*facing him from down R.*). Now that we are at last alone, I should be pleased to receive some explanation of your conduct at the ball this evening, Mr. Baldwin.

ARCH. Really, you are not gifted with the discernment for which I have always given you credit if an explanation is necessary, Mrs. Baldwin.

VAL. But you acted like a fool the whole evening. And I cannot understand why. It was a grand success. I am sure I enjoyed myself thoroughly.

ARCH. It is entirely unnecessary for you to assure me of that. The fact was only too self-evident.

VAL. Well! And why not? That is what I went for. Didn't you enjoy yourself?

ARCH. Yes; on two distinct occasions. Once, when I smoked a cigar with Cranford on the balcony; and later, when I put you into the carriage and followed.

VAL. You never did enjoy social affairs. You are always finding excuses for staying at home when I want you to go anywhere. I wonder that you went to-night.

ARCH. Now, that is the very question I have been trying to solve the whole evening. It must have been fate.

VAL. (*scornfully*). Fate? Nonsense.

ARCH. Well, I am rather glad now that I went.

VAL. Ah, then you are willing to admit —

ARCH. There, there, hold on. Don't get the idea that it was because I had a pleasant time. Far from it. But it gave me a chance to note your conduct.

VAL. My conduct?

ARCH. Yes, with other men.

VAL. (*indignantly*). What do you mean, Archibald Baldwin?

ARCH. Pray don't get theatrical.

VAL. But I demand to know.

ARCH. (*deliberately*). Very well, Mrs. Baldwin. Let me recall a few facts to your mind. You danced ten times to-night. Once with your brother; once with our host, and eight times with—whom? Who was it took you in to supper? Who took you to the conservatory? Yes, and by gad, who would have seen you to your carriage, if I hadn't stepped in and suggested the propriety of a man seeing his own wife home? Who? Who, I say? Why, Frank Graydon.

VAL. And does this call for the insinuations you have made; that I accept the common courtesies from a gentleman when my husband is derelict in his duty? You do not care for dancing; I am fond of it. Mr. Graydon, a friend of yours, by the way, has the instincts of a gentleman enough to offer me the chance to enjoy myself. As for supper and the conservatory—(*making a gesture*) my liege lord was not to be found on either occasion.

ARCH. Fine words. Fine words. Now, I never gave Graydon credit for so much of that gentlemanly instinct. The fact is a surprise to me.

VAL. Oh, you evidently have considerable to learn.

ARCH. I fully agree with you there. I *have* considerable to learn—particularly about my own wife.

VAL. If it is your intention to insult me, Mr. Baldwin, I will leave the room. (*Starts up stage.*)

ARCH. Oh, pray don't trouble yourself. I will save you the inconvenience of retiring by doing so myself. And I might

remark in passing that I will not be home to-morrow. I am going to Boston on business.

VAL. And what about the opera to-morrow night?

ARCH. (*sneeringly*). Oh, you should find no difficulty in securing an escort, even if your liege lord is not to be found. No doubt Graydon——

VAL. Stop! You have gone quite far enough. I will stand no more. Let us end it here and now.

ARCH. A good idea.

VAL. I will leave for home in the morning.

ARCH. All right. (*Picks up a railroad time-table and offers it to her.*) Here is a time-table. I think the first train leaves at six-thirty. Shall I tell the cook to have your breakfast ready at six?

VAL. No, sir. I'll not eat another meal in this house. I'll go home to my mother.

ARCH. Well, for all I care, you can go to——

VAL. (*interrupting quickly*). Sir?

ARCH. Your mother.

VAL. (*pulling off her wedding ring and flinging it on the floor*). There is your wedding ring. I hereby renounce you forever and ever.

ARCH. Amen.

VAL. I hope the next woman who wears it will get better treatment than I have received.

ARCH. Next woman? I hope I may drown before I ever put a ring on another woman's finger.

VAL. (*scornfully*). Drown? You couldn't keep your empty head under water long enough to drown.

ARCH. (*bowing mockingly*). Thank you. Is there any other compliment you would like to pay me before you go? If there is, I pray you don't hesitate about expressing it.

VAL. Rest assured, if I can think of anything that fittingly describes you, I shall express it. But the poor English language is so inadequate.

ARCH. It is too bad you didn't study Chinese.

(*Takes a cigar from his pocket and lights it.*)

VAL. It is too bad I didn't marry one. Even a heathen would be far preferable to you.

ARCH. Marry a Chinese? (*Laughs.*) You couldn't. They only like women with small feet.

VAL. My feet! Why, I only wear two.

ARCH. Yes, two shoes. But size eight.

VAL. Ruffian! Monster! (*She starts threateningly toward him, and he puffs a cloud of smoke her way. She pauses and coughs.*) Smoking again. It is only done to annoy me. You know very well how I abhor it.

ARCH. (*goes puffing smoke about the room between his words*). Well, after your display of wifely devotion, this room is in sore need of fumigating.

VAL. (*hysterical*). I have a mind to kill myself.

ARCH. Never change your mind. The river is only a short distance away.

VAL. (*thoughtfully*). Ah, yes. The cold, cold river.

ARCH. Oh, don't let that worry you. You will be plenty warm enough after you are dead. I know where you are going.

VAL. Ah, my death would please you too well. No, sir. I will live and publish your cruelty to the world.

ARCH. Publish it, eh? Well, I guess I can do a little publishing on my own account. (*Sits at a desk and writes.*) "To whom it may concern. This is to certify that my wife, Valerie Baldwin, has this day left my bed and board, and I will not be responsible for any debts she may contract. Signed, Archibald Baldwin." There. (*Rises.*) That will go in the morning papers.

VAL. (*snapping her fingers*). Pah! A fig for your responsibility. I want none of your money. My father always paid my bills before I married you.

ARCH. Yes, and he has not got over the financial strain yet.

VAL. You brute. I'll pack my things at once. [*Exit, R.*]

ARCH. Pack them as soon as you can. I am tired and sick of this wrangling. It puts a crimp into my temper that will take months to smooth out. (*Enter VAL., R. She has her arms full of clothing, among which must be concealed a pair of trousers and a baby's shoe. ARCH. watches her from down R.*) Be sure and take everything that belongs to you.

VAL. (*dropping clothing on the floor down L., and kneeling beside them*). I will. But have no fear. I'll not take anything that don't belong to me. (*Pulls out the pair of trousers.*) Here is something that don't belong to me. (*Holds them up.*)

ARCH. Oh, yes. That is a pair of my trousers that I gave you a week ago, and asked to have buttons sewed on the back.

VAL. Indeed? I fail to recall the circumstance. Still I

will not allow you to say that I have been remiss in my duty. I will sew them on now. (*Rises, still holding trousers.*)

ARCH. Oh, don't bother. Since you have seen fit to let them go so long, you need not get conscientious at the eleventh hour. Give them to me. (*He catches hold of one leg.*)

VAL. I won't. Give them to me.

(*She has hold of the other leg.*)

ARCH. I'll sew the buttons on.

VAL. No, you won't, either. (*They each pull at trousers and tear them apart.*) Well, I'll sew one button on, anyway.

(*Sits L., and has business of sewing on a button.*)

ARCH. You won't get a chance to sew the other one on. I'll do it myself.

VAL. (*scornfully*). You?

ARCH. Yes, me.

(*He has comedy business of going off and returning with a large needle and some heavy thread, or cord. Sits and attempts to sew on the button. Pricks his finger, sews up the leg with the button, and sews the leg to his own clothing, and other comic business.*)

VAL. (*having finished sewing her button on*). There. (*She tosses the leg of trousers across the room to him.*) You won't be able to say I didn't do your mending. Give me the other one.

ARCH. I won't.

VAL. Oh, very well.

(*She kneels once more before the pile of clothing and begins laying them aside, folding them, etc. While she is busy at this work, ARCH. gets a bottle of mucilage from desk, and laying the two legs on the floor tries to stick them together with the gum. Comedy business. At last VAL. discovers the baby's shoe. Music pp. from this point on to the end of sketch. She is about to toss it aside, but pauses, looks at it, then toward ARCH., who is busy and does not notice. She fondles the shoe, kisses it, and rising, starts impulsively toward ARCH. He glances up with a frown, and she stops. He turns to his work and the business is repeated. Then she lays the shoe on a table down C., between them, coughs and returns to her packing. ARCH.*

rises, shakes the trouser legs angrily and starts toward the table. Discovers the shoe. Pauses, glances at it, and then at VAL., who does not notice. He takes it up, fondles it, kisses it, wipes his eyes as if crying, and blows his nose. VAL. glances up and he drops shoe on table and turns away whistling. VAL. rises with arms outstretched, staggers to table and drops into chair, burying her face in her hands, with the shoe beneath them. ARCH. looks at her, smokes vigorously, then noticing the smoke, throws the cigar away. He goes slowly toward the table. She moves and he retreats. This business is repeated. Then he comes to other side of table and pauses. Note.—This business must be well worked up.)

ARCH. Ahem. Mrs. Baldwin. (*Pause.*) Mrs. Baldwin. (*Pause.*) Mrs. Baldwin!

VAL. (*raising a tear-stained face.*) Well?

ARCH. (*starting at sight of her face and turning away.*) Ere—nothing.

VAL. (*speaking brokenly.*) Will you let me take this shoe, Archibald? It's one of those our baby wore before she died.

ARCH. (*after clearing his throat.*) Nooo.

VAL. (*rising imperiously as if to speak angrily, then bowing her head, kissing the shoe and offering it to him.*) Very well. Here it is.

ARCH. (*taking hold of shoe.*) Valerie.

VAL. (*looking up and still holding shoe.*) Archie.

ARCH. I—I—cannot let it go.

VAL. And—I—cannot leave it.

ARCH. Then stay, and we will cherish it together. (*He draws her to him and they start to walk R., when he suddenly pauses as if having stepped on something. Glances down and picks up her wedding ring.*) What is that? Oh, your wedding ring.

VAL. (*offering her finger.*) Please put it on again, Archie.

ARCH. Not now, dear. To-morrow you shall go to Boston with me, and in some quiet country chapel we will be married again. For to-night let us be lovers once more.

(Leads her toward exit as curtain falls.)

CURTAIN

Just Notions

A Farcical Sketch

CHARACTERS

A WOMAN, *slightly demented.*

A TRAMP, *hired to look after her.*

SCENE.—*An ordinary interior. A table with writing materials, and various small articles, down L. C. Two chairs.*

Enter TRAMP from back at rise. He is dressed in very shabby clothing. He may introduce a song if desired.

TRAMP. Well, here I am, engaged at fifty dollars a month, and feed, to look after a woman who is slightly out of her mind. Not violent, so they told me, but just given to notions. Well, I can stand notions. In fact, a fellow who has been eaten by dogs, tossed by bulls, thrown off side door pullman cars, and managed to live through a young wife's cooking, can stand almost anything. (*Looks off R.*) Ah, here comes my patient now. She does look harmless.

Enter WOMAN at R. She may be dressed in any comical garb, and wear a hat, in which there is a very large hatpin.

WOMAN (*coming slowly down to TRAMP*). Good-morning, Mr. Shakespeare.

TRAMP. Hey? I didn't get you. Come again.

WOMAN. I said good-morning, Mr. Shakespeare. Have you the play ready that I am to star in?

TRAMP. Oh, yes, certainly. (*Aside.*) Gee whiz, she takes me for that guy wot wrote Ham-onlet, and the Other-feller. Well, I'll just humor her. That is the best way to get along with folks that are a little bit off their nob; just let them have their own way.

WOMAN. Mr. Shakespeare?

TRAMP. Yes, mam.

WOMAN. I called to read that play.

TRAMP. Certainly, certainly. (*He takes from a pocket a large roll of paper, filled with large Chinese characters.*) I just got it from (*mention some local person*).

WOMAN. Indeed? And does he write good plays? I never heard of him.

(*Takes roll of paper and scans it carefully.*)

TRAMP. Does he? Well, I just guess yes.

WOMAN. Ah, I like this very much. Especially the stabbing scene.

TRAMP (*startled*). W-h-a-t?

WOMAN. Why, yes. There it is. Can't you see it?

TRAMP (*scanning paper*). Ummmm—oh, yes—how foolish of me not to notice it.

WOMAN. Just let me try that scene. I'll use my hatpin for a dagger. (*Takes hatpin from her hat.*) Now, foul wretch, I have you! (*Catches TRAMP by the shoulder.*)

TRAMP (*breaking away*). Oh, no, you haven't.

WOMAN. Come here. (*Stamps her foot.*) Come here. This minute, I say.

TRAMP (*aside*). She treats me just as if I was a dog.

(*He moves to her side slowly, and with much hesitation.*)

WOMAN (*again catching him by the shoulder*). Ah, long have I prayed for this hour. I can see your craven heart.

TRAMP. I shouldn't wonder; it's in my throat.

WOMAN. Ah, coward, you tremble. And well you may.

TRAMP. Yes, let me go. I've got chills and fever.

WOMAN. But it will avail you naught. I see your game.

TRAMP. Yes, and I see yours. It's cut throat.

WOMAN. See my gleaming dagger. I raise it aloft. I strike —

(*She attempts to stab him, but he breaks away and gets behind table.*)

TRAMP. Well, strike if you want to, but you won't get a raise of salary out of me.

WOMAN. You are just too mean for anything. I'll write home to father and tell him how cruelly you have treated me. (*She comes quickly to table, catches hold of his head, bends it*

over on the table, writes on his face, and puts a postage stamp on the end of his nose. The writing may be done with a bit of charcoal, or a black lining pencil.) There. Now, John, just take this letter and post it.

TRAMP. Am I John?

WOMAN. Why, of course you are.

TRAMP. Oh, I see. I am John, and I am also the letter. All right, John, post the letter.

(He has comic business of trying to carry himself off stage. Then he returns.)

WOMAN. Now we will take a spin in my auto. *(She goes to TRAMP, down C., takes his hand and holds it to her ear, while she talks into his ear, as if she were telephoning.)* Hello, Central! Please give me six, six, seven, Belmont.

TRAMP *(aside)*. Oh, she is certainly crazy all right, all right. She can't tell a-phone when she sees one.

WOMAN. Hello! Is this Thomas? Yes? Well, this is your mistress, Flora Adele Van Astorbilt. Send the auto around to the door at once! Eh? Yes, at once. The auto! At once I said!

(She gradually speaks louder, until she is shouting in his ear.)

TRAMP *(squirming about)*. Oh, I say, ring off, won't you?

WOMAN *(still at 'phone)*. All right. I will be ready as soon as —

TRAMP *(breaking away and rubbing his ear)*. Sorry, mam, but you see somebody else cut in on the wire.

WOMAN. Never mind. Here is the auto now. *(She takes the two chairs, places one in front of the other, and sits in the rear one.)* Get in, Thomas, and be very careful not to exceed the speed limit.

TRAMP *(seating himself in the front chair; speaking aside)*. Well, say now, wouldn't this just electrocute you?

WOMAN. Why have we stopped?

TRAMP. Hey?

WOMAN. Why have we stopped? Something must be the matter. Do get out and see what it is. Perhaps the motor is out of order. Come, come, hurry up! I cannot wait here all day. I want to get to the opera.

TRAMP *(comedy business for TRAMP as he crawls under the chair and pretends to fix an auto)*. I don't know why you

didn't take a horse-car. I know how to drive them. (*Gets up and resumes his seat.*) There! Now it is all right. Ready? Let her go. Burr! (*Pretends to run auto.*)

WOMAN. Oh, Thomas, don't go so fast.

TRAMP. Can't help it, mam. Burr! Honk, honk! Hey, look there, we're coming. Buzzzzzz! Gong, gong! See us go around that corner on one wheel. Whizzzzzz! Gee! I begin to think I'm getting a little buggy myself.

WOMAN (*leaning forward intently*). Oh, Thomas, you have got the speed madness. I can see it in your eyes.

TRAMP. Well, I can't help it if I am a swift guy. It is the way I was brought up. Ye see, mam, I'm used to traveling on fast freights.

WOMAN (*still staring ahead*). Oh, help! Help! Thomas, stop, or we are lost! (*Points.*) See, there is an embankment. We are going toward it. Oh, help! Help!

(*She catches hold of the front chair and pulls it over, toppling TRAMP on the floor. She sinks back in her chair moaning.*)

TRAMP (*getting up and rubbing his back*). Well, I guess we must have hit something after all.

WOMAN (*between moans*). Thomas, I am hurt! Do send for an ambulance.

TRAMP. Send for an ambulance? I wish I could send for the morgue.

WOMAN. Oh, doctor, am I hurt badly? Do tell me the worst; I can stand it.

TRAMP (*assuming a professional air*). Humm. Not very badly. Your face is twisted, you have got terra-del-fuego; and I think the andante obligato is broken at the sic semper tyrannis.

WOMAN. Oh, how thankful I am that it is no worse. But I like this hospital. It is such a clean, quiet place. What a sweet little baby! Do bring the little cherub here.

(*Holds out her arms to TRAMP, who backs away.*)

TRAMP. What? No, sir! No, siree! I'll be John, Thomas, a letter, an auto, a doctor, a hospital, a jackass; in fact, anything in reason, but I'll be did, dad, dud, dolgorned, dill binged to Jude, teetotally cow kicked over by a bullrush, jig

slammed, gaul busted, flam flisted, twisted to thunder, if I'll be a baby! Nay, nay, Ophelia! Just give that dice-box in your cranium another shake.

WOMAN (*rising*). Ah, well, I am so glad that I am convalescent once more. Papa promised to take me to Europe, and, confidentially, I am just dying to get to Paris, for I am to finish my musical education when I get there.

TRAMP (*gazing at her bewildered*). Umm. Umm. (*Aside*.) Oh, but she has certainly got 'em awful!

WOMAN (*going to table*). So just pack the trunks, and be quick about it, for we have only four months to get ready.

TRAMP. Say, if we are going to stay here that long, I'm going home right now.

WOMAN. Now, be sure and put in everything. Here is my comb, and brush, and manicure set, and sixteen suits, and two dozen pair of stockings, and fan, and gloves, and powder box. (*She begins flinging all the small articles off the table. They may be anything but what she is mentioning. TRAMP drops them all, and gets down on his hands and knees to gather them together.*) Hurry, William. The steamer is leaving. I hear the whistle.

TRAMP (*still on hands and knees*). Oh, no—that is only (*introduce local joke*).

WOMAN (*crossing and sitting down on his back, as he kneels on floor*). Ah, is it not delightful to be on the heaving bosom of the ocean?

TRAMP. Yes, but I say, you hain't on the heaving bosom of the ocean. You're on the heaving back of yours truly.

WOMAN. I do so love to recline on deck and watch the sea-gulls at play.

TRAMP. Well, recline on deck if you want to, but for heaven sake get off my spine.

WOMAN. Come, Reginald. Come sit with me and admire the boundless blue.

TRAMP. My dear madam, I hired as a nurse, not as an acrobat. I can't sit on myself.

WOMAN. What? You refuse? I fear you do not love me any more. I shall commit suicide if you desert me.

TRAMP. Oh, don't you worry. I'm not likely to do that. You've got me cinched all right, all right.

WOMAN (*rising from his back*). At last we have arrived.

TRAMP (*rising stiffly to his feet and rubbing his back*). Well, I'm glad we had a record-breaking trip.

WOMAN. Now, papa dear, I am going to leave you for a while. I want to see Professor Del Monte and make arrangements for my singing lessons.

TRAMP (*still rubbing his back*). Go ahead. Don't mind me. I wonder where I can get any Omega Oil?

WOMAN (*crossing stage and returning and facing TRAMP*). Good-morning, Professor.

TRAMP (*staggering back*). What? Back again, and on a new tack. Say, you beat any lightning change artist I ever saw.

WOMAN. I have come all the way from America to see you.

TRAMP (*imitating a mincing Frenchman*). Ah, you do me—vat you call heem—ze grrrrrand honor.

WOMAN. I want you to try my voice.

TRAMP. That is unnecessary. I'll convict it without trial.

WOMAN. Shall I begin?

TRAMP. Oh, certainly. Go ahead and be happy; I'm hardened. (WOMAN *sings the scales in a screechy voice*.) Good! Excellent! I think that in about ninety-nine years you'll get a diploma.

WOMAN. I am so glad you think I have a voice.

TRAMP. Yes, but you had better not take my word for it. I'm an awful jollier.

WOMAN. Shall we try a duet?

TRAMP. What? Oh, yes, let us *do-et*.

WOMAN (*turning to table*). What shall it be? Ah, here is the Gobble Duet.

TRAMP. The Gobble Duet? Oh, I can't sing that.

WOMAN. Why not?

TRAMP. I haven't eaten turkey in two years.

WOMAN. Please try. For my sake, Pippo.

(*Puts her arms about his neck and coaxes him.*)

TRAMP (*resignedly*). All right. Anything to keep the baby quiet.

(*They begin the Gobble Duet from "The Mascotte," and sing the first part as comedy. As the first part ends, they should make exit and quick change; returning as Pippo and Bettine, and sing the last part properly.*)

CURTAIN

After Many Years

A Strong Dramatic Sketch

CHARACTERS

MRS. MADALINE MARSH, *a young widow.*

ROBERT WARREN, *an old lover.*

MAID.

POLICEMAN.

SCENE.—*A parlor.*

Enter MRS. M. *at back at rise of curtain. She is attired in a rich evening gown and cloak. She goes slowly to table down stage and rings a bell.*

Enter MAID, R.

MAID. Why, madam, is it you? You are home very early, are you not?

MRS. M. Yes, Marie, I am early. But I grew tired, and excused myself. (MAID *takes off her cloak.*) You may go now. (MAID *exits* R. MRS. M. *seats herself at table and rests her head on her hand.*) Yes, I am tired. Oh, so tired of the whole empty show. I long to get away, far away from the gaudy, frivolous whirl of society, and—rest. (*Pause.*) Rest? But where shall I find it? Will the quiet of some country village restore me? Would even the solitude of the cloister bring me peace, contentment, happiness? (*Shakes her head sadly.*) No. Once I sinned against the promptings of my heart, and I must still bear the punishment. Once I was offered all that I sought—but I shut the door. And now? Oh, heaven—life is one long, dreary waste. Behind, before me, it stretches like some grim, foreboding desert. There is no light, no hope. Not even in flight. (*Pause.*) No, I must keep in the giddy throng in order to seek forgetfulness. I

must laugh and dance, and play with the empty baubles to the end. (*Sighs.*) How long, oh, Lord, how long?

(*She buries her face in her hands on the table. Pause.*)

Enter ROB. at door in back. Music pp. He is dressed in rough clothing, wears a mask and has a small cap pulled over his eyes. He peers cautiously about, then comes slowly down stage. Discovers MRS. M. and utters a cry. She raises her head, discovers him, and springs to her feet, clutching at the table for support.

ROB. Stop! Not a word. Do you understand?

(*Levels a pistol at her.*)

MRS. M. (*gasping*). A robber!

(*She attempts to run off L., but he catches her roughly by the wrist and presses the pistol to her head.*)

ROB. Curse you, do you want to die?

MRS. M. (*fearfully*). No, no, no. Have pity.

ROB. Be quiet, then, and sit down.

(*Flings her roughly into a chair down L.*)

MRS. M. You have come here for money, jewels? Here.

(*She nervously strips rings from her fingers, necklace from her neck, and tiara from her hair, and offers them to him.*)

ROB. Bah, I hate them. (*Flings them back in her lap.*)

MRS. M. (*surprised*). You—you do not want them?

ROB. No—I—I—— (*Glances about the room.*)

MRS. M. But surely you have come here to rob me. You knew I was rich.

ROB. Rich? (*Turns on her fiercely.*) Rich? If you do not want to madden me beyond recall, don't—don't talk about the rich. I hate them!

MRS. M. (*interested*). What have they ever done to you?

ROB. What have they ever done to me? What have they ever done to me? (*Laughs harshly.*) It was one of them that made me what I am to-day: an outcast and bitter foe to humanity. He stole from me first. Stole the only thing I ever really coveted. The only true wealth I ever

possessed. The love of a woman. With everything at his command, he chose to filch from me the only thing I could call my own. God ! how I hate him. How I hate them all.

MRS. M. (*sympathetically*). Oh, sir, I—I—do not understand.

ROB. Of course you don't. But what matters that ? You would not appreciate it if you did. Like the rest of your kind, you would only gloat over my loss.

MRS. M. No, no. Tell me. Perhaps I can —

ROB. (*interrupting roughly*). What ? Restore my possessions ? (*Laughs.*) You fool. Listen. Ten years ago I was a rising young lawyer. I had brains and ambition. Money ? Pah ! I had none of that ; but I possessed the love of a woman, which was worth more to me than all the gold of Ophir. It was the loadstone of my life ; the incentive that would have spurred me on to victory ; the key that would have unlocked the doors of the world. (*Pauses and passes his hand across his eyes.*) But there came a day when he appeared. He with his cynical, smiling face ; he with his gold. (*Speaks fiercely.*) He dangled before her eyes a shimmering shower of wealth. He smiled upon her ; he uttered tender words ; he dazzled her with his gold ; and lured her on like some phantom will-o'-the-wisp, until—until—(*laughing harshly*) until he won her ; and I—I—was undone. Shorn of life, love, happiness, ambition, everything. (*Pause, and he glances at her.*) Isn't it a joke ? A huge, ghastly joke. One of the kind that you—a rich woman like you, ought to appreciate. (*Pause.* MRS. M. *has her head bowed.*) Well ? Curse you, why don't you laugh ?

MRS. M. (*raising her face which shows signs of grief*). No, no, that is not a joke. It is a tragedy.

ROB. A—a — ? Yes, you are right. A tragedy. And it has left its impress upon me. Since that time, I have lived with but one all-consuming desire :—revenge. Not for mere wealth—I scorn it—but to repay them in kind. To take—not their money—but that which they covet more than their wealth—whatever that may be. Keep your gold, your jewels ; they are trash to me. What I want, what I will have, is that thing which is most precious to you. (*Glances about.*) Ah, have you a child ?

MRS. M. (*faintly*). No.

ROB. You mean it ? Don't try to play with me.

MRS. M. (*looking him in the face*). I swear it.

ROB. Very well. If you had had one, I should have taken it. To most mothers, their offspring is their greatest prize. (*He looks carefully about the room, and then back to her. Suddenly discovers a small locket which she wears about her neck, and which she did not take off when she offered him the rest of her jewelry.*) Ah, I will take that—locket.

MRS. M. (*rising and catching at the locket*). No, no, no! Anything but that.

ROB. Give it to me. (*They struggle. He wrenches it from her neck. She sinks in the chair, sobbing convulsively. He glances at the locket in his hand, with a harsh laugh.*) I thought this would be the thing I most wanted—from you. Some fool's picture, eh? (*He opens it, then starts; and springing forward, catches her by the shoulder.*) Speak, woman! Where did you get this—this picture?

MRS. M. (*looking up, and speaking pleadingly*). Oh, sir, take anything, everything—only give me that.

ROB. (*ignoring her words and speaking roughly*). Answer me, do you hear? Where did you get that picture?

MRS. M. Why—why—from the one whose face you see there.

ROB. You lie! That is Robert Warren. Warren as he looked ten years ago, before the serpent entered his Eden; before his life was blasted.

MRS. M. (*starting and rising*). Yes—yes—but—but how do you know all this?

ROB. How do I know? How do I know? (*Laughs.*) Because I am he. (*Tears mask from his face.*)

MRS. M. (*staggering back*). You—you—Robert Warren?

ROB. Yes, and this is my picture, as I looked then.

MRS. M. Robert! Oh, heavens! I——

(*Raises her hands to her face.*)

ROB. (*starting at the name*). Eh? (*He takes her hands from her face and gazes long and earnestly into her eyes.*) Yes, I am Robert Warren. And you—you—are Madaline.

MRS. M. (*slowly bowing her head and answering faintly*). Yes.

ROB. Good heavens! What have I done? What have I done?

(*He staggers to C., sinks in chair and buries his face in his hands.*)

MRS. M. (*crossing to him and laying a hand on his shoulder*). Robert. (*Pause.*) Robert.

ROB. (*glancing up with a haggard face*). What?

MRS. M. How you have changed.

ROB. (*slowly nodding his head*). Yes, Madaline. The blow that was struck at me ten years ago left its stamp on my face and in my heart; like another mark of Cain. I—I—have suffered the torments of Hades since that day.

MRS. M. (*speaking softly and tenderly*). I, too, have suffered. Suffered for the mistake I made in those days of my thoughtless youth. You told the truth. I was lured away by the splendors of wealth, but oh, how bitterly have I atoned for my sin. A married life of eight years, which in its daily horrors seemed to be each hour an age. You have suffered, you say? Well, look at me, and be satisfied with your revenge.

ROB. (*starting to his feet*). No, no. Against any one but you—Madaline. You say your life has been a torment? (*Angrily.*) Where is the brute who has dared to —

MRS. M. Hush, Robert.

ROB. But your husband? He who stole you from me, and then made you suffer? Where is he?

(*Starts R., but she detains him.*)

MRS. M. (*soberly*). He is dead.

ROB. Dead!

MRS. M. Yes. Two years ago.

ROB. (*speaking with animation as of new hope*). Then—then—you are free. Free once more?

MRS. M. Yes.

ROB. Oh, Madaline — (*Pauses, then flings out his arms with a despairing gesture.*) No, no, it is too late. Too late—now.

MRS. M. Why too late, Robert?

ROB. What have I to offer you now? A wasted life: a blackened reputation. No, no. Let me go. Here, keep your memory of the past.

(*Offers her the locket, but she takes his hand.*)

MRS. M. (*tenderly*). Robert, I am free, as you have said, and I still love you.

ROB. Don't. Don't tempt me, Madaline.

MRS. M. (*repeating tenderly*). I love you, Robert.

ROB. (*after a pause*). And you can say that, knowing what I have been? What—what—I am?

MRS. M. Yes. Was it not my fault? Am I not equally to blame? All your crime is upon my head. I am the guilty party, the real culprit. (*Pause.*) Robert, I love you.

ROB. (*pausing with bowed head; then raising his eyes to hers, and speaking brokenly*). Can it be that after what seemed an endless purgatory I am at last to catch a glimpse of heaven?

MRS. M. (*softly*). If you but will.

ROB. (*rapturously*). Madaline! (*He is about to put his arms about her, when a noise is heard off stage. He pauses and starts back, whispering hoarsely.*) Hark! What was that?

MRS. M. (*going to door at back and glancing off, then returning quickly*). It is an officer.

ROB. An officer? And on my track. (*He catches up the pistol which he has laid on the table.*) But he shall not take me. I will not go. It is his life—or mine.

MRS. M. No, no, Robert. (*Appealingly.*)

ROB. But I tell you I will not. In this the hour of my regeneration to be taken back to a dungeon? No, I will not. I'll die first.

MRS. M. No, no. Quick! Get behind me.

ROB. What? Hide behind a woman's skirts? Oh, Madaline, do you take me for a coward?

MRS. M. (*in an agony*). No, no, you are brave. But —

ROB. Then let me fight it out.

MRS. M. (*throwing her arms about his neck*). Robert, don't you love me any longer?

ROB. (*clasping her to himself*). Can you doubt it?

MRS. M. Then do as I ask, and I will save you—without dishonor. Hush. (*He slowly crouches behind her, with his pistol clutched tightly in his hand, ready for use. Enter POLICEMAN, at door at back. MRS. M. draws herself up and speaks sternly.*) To what am I indebted for this intrusion into the privacy of my house, officer?

POLICEMAN (*touching his cap*). Your pardon, madam, but I saw a suspicious looking person enter this house by a lower window, some time ago, and I have reason to believe that he is a burglar. With your permission, I should like to search the house.

MRS. M. (*haughtily*). There is no one in this house who has not a perfect right to be here.

POLICEMAN. But, madam —

MRS. M. (*interrupting*). When I require the services of the police, I will advise you. (*Coldly.*) You may go. (*As he hesitates.*) I said—you may go.

POLICEMAN (*after a pause*). Very well, madam.

(*He slowly exits.*)

ROB. (*catching her hand, which he presses to his lips*). Oh, Madaline, my life, my love, my all. You have indeed saved me. Perhaps from murder.

MRS. M. (*laying her other hand on his bowed head and speaking tenderly*). Robert, as gold is refined by heat, so have our souls been tried by fire. The dross has all been burned. We have both passed through the valley of the shadow, and after many years there is happiness.

ROB. (*looking up from his knees*). Happiness?

MRS. M. Yes, happiness. And peace, and joy and—and —love.

ROB. God bless you.

(*Bows his head, on which her hand still rests.*)

CURTAIN

A Lesson in Love

Comedy Sketch for One Male and One Female

CHARACTERS

ALLEN WRIGHT, *a ranch owner.*

MAUD REYNOLDS, *an Eastern girl.*

SCENE.—On WRIGHT'S ranch in the Southwest. May be played either as an interior or exterior. In either case, there should be a Western flavor to the surroundings.

Enter AL., at back, at rise. He carries a letter in his hand.

AL. (*calling off*). All right, Judson, you can go ahead with the branding of that last lot of mavericks. Eh? Well, hold on a minute then. (*Opens letter and glances quickly over it. Then calls off.*) No, I won't ride down until later. Good luck. (*Waves his hat off, then comes down stage, stops and reads letter.*) "Dear Mr. Wright:—Aunt Mary and I are at the Grandview Hotel, and I am going to run over to your ranch to-day, for old time's sake. (*He pauses and sighs, then continues.*) Have a real nice cowboy handy. You know I dote on them. Until we meet, I am your friend, Maud Reynolds." (*Sighs again as he slowly folds the letter.*) My friend, eh? Ah, there was a time when I fondly thought that she would be more to me than just "my friend." But the fates decided otherwise. She was a romantic girl, with all a school-girl's notions about sentiment and love; while I—was a lawyer. (*Shrugs his shoulders.*) But it went hard. So hard, that I gave up my practice, and came out here to bury myself. And now I am to meet her again. (*Rapturously.*) Oh, Maud! (*Pause.*) Oh, what is the use? She still dotes on cowboys. (*Laughs.*) Well, if she could only see a few of the specimens that I have on my ranch, it might — (*Stops abruptly, as*

if struck by an idea, and claps his hands together.) By Jove! A happy thought. I'll do it. Disguise myself, and give her a sample of what a real nice cowboy is like. It will be a lark, and who knows? Perhaps — Yes, I'll do it.

[Exit R., hurriedly.]

(Laugh heard off stage. Enter MAUD at back. She is an up-to-date Eastern girl, dressed in the fashion.)

MAUD *(speaking off)*. Oh, no, it is all right. I will find him if he is here. We are old friends, you know. *(Comes down stage looking about.)* So this is where Allen lives, is it? How charming. How unconventional. How—how—romantic. Oh, if he had only waited until after he became a ranch owner to ask me to be his wife, I would have accepted him gladly. For—I—do—love—him. The dear fellow. But I simply couldn't stand being the wife of a musty old lawyer. No. *(Pause.)* I wonder if he has changed? I wonder if he—he—still thinks—still—cares—for me? But there doesn't seem to be any one about. Perhaps that woman was right when she told me he had gone to brand some cattle. He surely must have gotten my letter. Suppose he has, and has deliberately gone off, rather than see me? *(Shows anger and disappointment.)* I wonder who that woman is, anyway? And what right has she to be here? She seemed quite at home, too. Good heavens! Perhaps she is his wife. *(Sinks on sofa, or rustic seat, and clasps her hands.)* Oh, no, no. I cannot think of that. I cannot think of that.

(Buries her face in her hands.)

Enter AL., R. He is disguised as a cowboy, has false moustache, etc., and carries a pistol.

AL. *(shouting loudly)*. Whoop! Whoop! *(Fires pistol in air. MAUD springs to her feet with a cry.)* Eh? *(Pretends to discover her.)* Oh, I beg yer pardon, miss. I didn't know the gov'nor had company. Sit down and be sociable. Be you the bunch o' ruffles that he said wus comin' over here to-day?

MAUD *(coldly)*. I am Miss Reynolds, and I —

AL. Then it's O. K. Ye wrote to him, didn't ye?

MAUD. Why—why—yes.

AL. And ye told him to trot out a nice likely cowboy fur ye, didn't ye?

MAUD (*staggering back*). Why—why ——

AL. Oh, come now, don't git leery. Ye know ye did; 'cause I saw the letter, and the gov'nor has sent me in to do the honors until he gits back. Sit down. (*As she still hesitates he repeats gruffly.*) Sit down! (*MAUD sinks on sofa or bench.*) Now ye look more ter home. (*He sits beside her and she moves as far away as she can.*) Have a drink?

(*Pulls out a whiskey flask and offers it to her.*)

MAUD (*horror-struck*). Heavens! No.

AL. Think it hain't good stuff, hey? Why, say, girlie, a good swig o' this would crimp all the false hair on yer head; and two swigs would make ye feel like gittin' on the table and doin' a Salome. (*MAUD attempts to rise, but he commands.*) Sit down! (*She sinks back.*) Did ye ever do a Salome?

MAUD (*angrily*). No.

AL. Gee! Well, ye needn't take my head off. No, I reckon ye're too fat to do a real up to the minute fling. (*Pause.*) Well, what shall we talk about? The gov'nor told me to entertain ye. Perhaps ye'd like to see me do a little shootin'? Say, ye git over thar. (*He catches her by the shoulder and roughly stands her down L. He then crosses to R., and faces her.*) Now stand still. (*Pulls his pistol.*)

MAUD. Mercy! What are you going to do?

AL. I'll bet ye a quid o' terbacker agin a wad o' chewin' gum that I kin knock yer earrings right out o' yer ears, without touchin' the skin. (*Raises gun.*) One, two ——

MAUD. No, no; stop. (*Frightened.*)

AL. Why?

MAUD. Suppose you should miss me?

AL. I never missed in my life. If I don't hit the earrings ——

MAUD. Yes—yes ——

AL. I'll surely hit somewhere on yer face.

MAUD. Oh, heavens!

AL. (*again raising gun*). One, two ——

MAUD (*in an agony of fear*). No, no, don't! You might kill me.

AL. (*exasperated*). Oh, hell!

MAUD (*shocked*). Sir!

AL. If ye go on like this, ye'll have me swearin' the first thing ye know.

MAUD. But if you should kill me?

AL. Well, don't ye s'pose we'd give ye as good a funeral as ye'd git out East? We hain't heathern out here. (*Raises gun.*) One, two —

MAUD. Wait! Stop! I don't want to see your ability as a shot. I will take your word for it. Come, tell me something about Mr. Wright.

AL. The gov'nor, eh? Well, all right. But ye're losin' a chance to see the finest shootin' in the West. (*Both sit on sofa or bench.*) Now wot d'ye want to know?

MAUD. Tell—me—is—he—married?

AL. (*aside*). By Jove, I do believe she loves me yet. (*Aloud.*) Married? Well, I just reckon yes. Not much though. Only three so far, I think.

MAUD (*aghast*). Three!

AL. Yep. It would have been four, but the last one didn't take.

MAUD. Horrors!

AL. Oh, thar hain't nuthin' horrors about that. Why, I got six myself, and I wouldn't mind addin' another to the bunch—that is if she wus a swell looker—like you. (*Edges closer.*) Say, you said ye just doted on cowboys. How would ye like to buckle up with me, hey?

MAUD (*disgustedly*). You?

AL. Yep. I know I hain't quite as swell as the gov'nor —

MAUD. No, I guess not. Mr. Wright is —

AL. Is the real goods, eh? Yep, I know. But I don't believe you'd stand any sorter chance with him. Ye see, he's all fur business. He don't "dote on cowboys," except when they're in the saddle, a-roundin' up a herd o' cattle. He wants a woman who hain't buggy over the latest fashions, and afraid to soil her fingers with a little honest work. He wants—well, just a good, true wife, who will love him always, and keep house, and mind the children. That's his kind, and I sorter reckon that you don't belong to that breed. (*MAUD bows her head sadly.*) So ye'd better hitch up with me. I'm a dead game sport; same's you. I don't care whether school keeps or not. So I reckon we were made fur each other. Well, wot d'ye say? Shell I kiss ye, jest to seal the bargain?

(*Attempts to embrace her, but she roughly pushes him away.*)

MAUD (*angrily*). Go away, you brute. I hate you. I hate all of your kind. I—I—(*sobbingly*) I—am—going—home.

AL. Wait. Don't go yet. (*As MAUD starts up stage.*) Ye hain't seen the gov'nor yit, ye know, and it may be yer last chance.

MAUD (*pausing abruptly*). My last chance? What—what do you mean?

AL. Why, ye see, he's about down and out with the "con."

MAUD. You—you—mean consumption?

AL. Yep. Ye see he loved some gal in the East, before he come out here. I reckon she must 'a' been a high-flyer like you, who couldn't appreciate a real man like he was. Anyway, she threw him down, and he cum out here to bury himself. (*Pause.*) And I reckon he'll succeed.

MAUD (*impulsively*). No, no, no. Don't say that.

AL. Truth's truth, hain't it? She treated him worse than a cayote; and now he's jest wearin' himself away. (*Pause.*) Do ye want to see him?

MAUD (*staggering down stage*). Yes, yes. I'll—I'll wait.

AL. All right, I'll call him, if he's anywhere around. (*At R. he speaks aside.*) I believe she cares for me after all.

[*Exit hurriedly, R.*]

(*Note.—He leaves his pistol on the table as he goes.*)

MAUD (*sinking on sofa or bench*). Oh, Allen, Allen; how cruel I have been. Cruel to myself as well as you. I did not know my own heart then; I was only a foolish, thoughtless girl. But I loved you then. And I—I—yes, I might as well confess it to myself—I love him yet. (*Pause.*) And now he is married—a polygamist even. Oh, the thought is terrible! Dying of consumption, too. And it is all—all my fault. Oh, if I could but make some reparation to him. If I might only do something for him. Something to prove to him that I do love him. (*A pause, then she speaks resolutely.*) Yes, I will. I will. In spite of that woman out there. Yes, in spite of all his wives.

(*Note.—This speech must be taken slowly in order to give AL. time to remove his disguise.*)

Enter AL., R. He is in proper costume. She does not notice him until he speaks.

AL. (*cordially, but not affectionately*). Miss Reynolds?

MAUD (*discovering him and springing to her feet with a*

glad cry). Oh, Allen, Allen. (*Pauses as if realizing.*) I—mean—Mr. Wright.

AL. (*crossing to her side*). I am real glad to see you. It is so seldom that one meets an Easterner out here. Won't you be seated? (*MAUD sinks on sofa and stares at him. AL. faces her c.*) I received your note this morning, and tried to comply with your request. How did you like my specimen of the real, simon pure cowboy?

MAUD. Don't. Don't speak of him to me. He was unbearable.

AL. (*smiling*). But he was a very good example, I assure you; and you "dote on cowboys," you know.

MAUD (*appealingly*). Please don't be hard on me, Allen. I—I—know I have been foolish. Nay, worse: criminal, to treat you as I did. And now—now you are so ill.

AL. (*affecting surprise*). Ill?

MAUD. Yes. Dying of consumption. And a Mormon.

AL. (*laughing*). Indeed? And who told you all that?

MAUD. Why—why—that—that—man.

AL. He must have been trying to fool you, knowing you to be a tenderfoot.

MAUD (*looking up with renewed hope*). Well, I don't care—if—if—it was not so.

AL. Of course not.

MAUD. And you are not sick?

AL. Never felt better in my life.

MAUD. And you haven't got three wives?

AL. Three wives? Well, I guess not. Why, I haven't got one—yet.

MAUD (*starting*). Yet?

AL. (*turning away and speaking aside*). Oh, I do believe she loves me after all. But I will put her to one more test.

MAUD (*rising*). Yet? You said "Yet." Do you mean—

AL. (*facing her and speaking seriously*). I mean that when you told me—back in old New York—that you did not care for me—that I was too practical and commonplace—I came out here to try and forget.

MAUD (*interested*). Yes, yes.

AL. I did not succeed. But—— (*Pauses.*)

MAUD. Yes, yes, go on. But—but what?

AL. Why, I soon met a woman who became very much attached to me. (*MAUD exhibits her anger and jealousy.*) What had I to live for? Nothing. But I thought I might as

well make some one happy, even if I could not be happy myself.

MAUD. Oh, Allen!

AL. But perhaps after we are married I shall learn to care for her.

MAUD (*imploringly*). No, no. You must not. You shall not. I, too, love you, Allen; and I have the prior right.

AL. (*quietly*). You did have—once. But you refused the offer. Now——

MAUD. Yes, now?

AL. Now another woman holds the option.

MAUD (*angrily*). Is it that—that—dark-skinned thing that I saw as I came in?

AL. I shouldn't wonder. But you must not talk of her like that.

MAUD. Why not?

AL. She is a Mexican.

MAUD (*angrily*). I don't care if she is a Hottentot.

AL. And very jealous of me.

MAUD. So am I.

AL. Hush! If she knew you were here now, and saying such things to me, she would surely kill you.

MAUD. You think so?

AL. I am sure of it.

MAUD. Is she a good shot with the pistol?

AL. (*smiling*). An excellent shot. (MAUD *deliberately crosses to table, picks up the pistol and starts up stage*. AL., *alarmed*.) Good heavens, Maud! What are you going to do?

MAUD (*with determination*). I am going out to find that Mexican woman.

AL. (*frightened*). And kill her?

MAUD. Oh, no; I'll give her a fair chance for her life. You say she is a good shot? So am I. We will fight it out.

AL. (*admiringly*). For me?

MAUD. Yes, for you, Allen. (*Impulsively*.) I want you, and I'm going to have you, or die in the attempt.

(*She starts once more up stage, but he catches her and puts an arm about her waist.*)

AL. My own Maud. So you are willing to risk your life for me, are you?

MAUD (*glancing about in alarm*). Yes, I am. But do be careful. I don't want that Mexican to get the drop on me.

AL. (*laughing*). Come. Sit down. I have a confession to make. (*He leads her down to sofa or bench, and sits beside her.*) Do you know who your gallant cowboy really was?

MAUD. Why—why—he—was ——

AL. Myself.

MAUD. You?

AL. Yes. I wanted to prove to you just how foolish your romantic notions really were.

MAUD. Well, you succeeded.

AL. And as for that Mexican woman ——

MAUD. Well, what of her? Surely that was not you also, was it?

AL. Oh, no. But she is the wife of my overseer. She is insanely jealous, as I have said, but it is over her own greaser husband—not me.

MAUD. And you are entirely free?

AL. (*smiling quizzically*). Well, no, not entirely. I believe there is a girl in the East who claims me by prior right.

MAUD. Indeed I do, and I shall foreclose on my claim at once. It is a dangerous experiment to try and teach a woman a lesson in love, but you have succeeded admirably.

AL. And you will be my wife after all?

MAUD. As soon as we can find a minister. (*Rises.*) I do so “dote on cowboys,” you know.

(*They may close with a duet.*)

CURTAIN

The Baby

A Humorous Sketch for One Male and One Female

CHARACTERS

JACK MARSHALL.

MRS. MARSHALL, *his wife.*

SCENE.—*Dining-room at the Marshalls'. Table set for two. A pistol in a drawer of a sideboard, up stage. Lively music for rise of curtain.*

Enter MRS. M. at rise. She is dressed in ordinary house gown, and carries a man's coat and a work-basket.

MRS. M. Here it is, nearly time for Jack to be getting home from the office, and I have not mended that coat of his that I promised to. But what with all the shopping and social calls that I had to make, I really forgot it. However, I can hurry with it, and he will never know that I left it until the last moment. (*Sits down stage, and has business of mending a rip in the coat. She can introduce a song here, while she works.*) There! It is done. I wonder what he has in his pockets? The usual assortment of odds and ends, I suppose. (*Looks through the pockets and takes various articles from them.*) Yes, a box partly filled with cigarettes; a match-safe; two keys, toothpicks, a pencil and—a letter? Now I wonder what that can be? Some musty legal matter, I presume. I just hate law; it is so dry and uninteresting. And then—— (*She has drawn letter from envelope during her speech, and now starts and clutching the letter, stares at it.*) Eh? What is this? (*Reads.*) “My darling Jack:—Please come back and I will forgive you everything. Yes, even your mad infatuation for that hateful blonde. Baby cries for you continually; and so does your loving wife, Vivian.” (*Pause.*) Oh, what can

it mean? "My darling Jack." That is his name. And "that hateful blonde"; that must be me. Oh, the brute, the monster, the wretch! Married to another woman, whom he deserts to marry me. Mother told me she never would trust a lawyer. And the baby, too. Oh, this is terrible. I am sure I shall faint. (*Pause.*) No, I won't. I'll go home to mother.

(*Rises hastily and exits R., dropping letter on the floor as she goes.*)

Enter JACK at back. He has a baby in long clothes, which he carries awkwardly. He glances anxiously about, then comes slowly down stage.

JACK. Well, if this isn't a nice predicament for a young married man to be in. Saddled with a baby, and one that I don't even know the parents of. And the most galling part of the whole thing is, to think that I, Jack Marshall, lawyer, man of the world, and old New Yorker that I am, should be taken in by the baby game. I meet a pretty woman in the street, and she asks me to hold her youngster a minute while she arranges her hair, which the wind had tossed about. Like a blamed fool I fall for it and take the blasted kid, just to oblige a lady in distress; when presto! she is gone in the crowd, and I am left standing there with this wee bit of unknown humanity in my arms. Oh, Jack Marshall, you are a double riveted idiot. You deserve to be kicked. Well, perhaps I shall get what I deserve when Alice finds it out. By Jove! I hadn't thought of her. I won't dare let her see it. I would never hear the end of it. She would call me seventeen kinds of a fool, and perhaps get a commission to inquire into my sanity. Or else—— (*Starts.*) Good heavens, suppose she should jump to the conclusion that it was mine? You never can trust a woman. Lord! the very thought sends cold shivers down my back. No, no, I cannot let her see it. I'll just hide it somewhere, get her out of the house on some pretext, and then send it to the police station. Let me see. (*Glances about.*) Ah, this will do very nicely. (*Puts the baby under a sofa up stage.*) Burr! It gives me a chill, even in July, to think of the possibilities if that bit of flesh should suddenly set up a howl. (*Notices letter on the floor and picks it up.*) Hello, a letter. Oh, it is that little note that my client, Mrs. Lloyd, wanted me to send to her husband. And I shoved it in my office coat and forgot all about it. Oh, well, I saw him personally and

effected a reconciliation ; and they are now living happily together again ; so I guess it is all right. (*Tosses letter on the table ; listens.*) Ah, she is coming. Now to fake up some excuse for getting her out of the house. (*Enter MRS. M. She is dressed for traveling, and carries a valise.*) Hello, Alice. Going out ? Good.

MRS. M. (*icily*). Sir !

JACK. Oh—ere—no, I didn't mean that exactly, but —

MRS. M. Well ?

JACK (*stammering, as she regards him closely*). Why—why — What is the matter, anyway ? Going out—and with a grip ? (*Goes toward her in alarm at her manner.*)

MRS. M. Don't touch me, you monster. Don't you dare to touch me.

JACK (*aside*). I wonder if she is getting paresis ? (*Aloud.*) I say, Alice dear, are you ill ?

MRS. M. Go away. Go away, I tell you.

JACK. But where are you going ? Really, I am getting alarmed.

MRS. M. (*sternly*). I am going home.

JACK (*aghast*). Home !

MRS. M. Yes, home. Do you suppose I would live with you a single moment, after I had discovered your base duplicity ?

JACK (*staggered*). My duplicity ? I'm stuck. Say, is this a new game ? Or is it a puzzle ? If it is, I give it up. What is the answer ?

MRS. M. (*scornfully*). Oh, it is not a new game—for you. Marrying women, and then deserting them.

JACK. W-h-a-t ?

MRS. M. And the baby, too.

JACK. Baby !

(*Starts violently, and casts an apprehensive glance toward the sofa.*)

MRS. M. Ah, you start. I knew it was true.

JACK. True ? True ? What is true ? For heaven's sake, Alice, explain.

MRS. M. (*with a wave of her hand toward the table*). That letter.

JACK. That letter ? (*Laughs, relieved.*) Oh, I see it all now.

MRS. M. You do, do you ? Oh, you vile wretch. Is it

not enough that you are guilty of such a crime, without laughing over it, as if it were a joke?

JACK. Now see here, my dear. Listen. You read that letter, which you found in the pocket of my office coat, and thought it belonged to me, eh?

MRS. M. Well, and why shouldn't I? Isn't your name Jack; and am I not a blonde?

JACK. Very true. But do you suppose that I am the only Jack in the world, or you the only blonde?

MRS. M. (*hesitatingly*). Ummmm—well—no, but ——

JACK. Listen. I had a client by the name of Mrs. Lloyd, whose husband took it into his foolish head to leave her, and run off with some blonde chorus girl. She came to me for advice. As she admitted that she still loved him, I advised her to write that letter, begging him to return, before beginning suit for divorce. She agreed to my suggestion, wrote that letter, and left it with me to mail. I slipped it in my pocket, and forgot all about it. That is the whole story in a nutshell.

MRS. M. And is all this true?

JACK. It is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

MRS. M. And you never had another wife?

JACK. Of course not.

MRS. M. Nor a baby?

JACK. Eh? Baby? I guess not. Baby, indeed? I wish every mother's son of them was into the middle of the ——

(*Baby cries. Note.—This can be arranged by having some one give the sound off stage.*)

MRS. M. (*interrupting him*). Hark, what was that?

JACK (*aside*). Confound it, it is that blasted kid. (*Aloud.*) Why, I didn't hear anything. (*Baby cries, and JACK speaks louder and louder, trying to drown its cries, until he is almost shouting.*) But come, Alice, this has upset you. You need some fresh air. Do take a stroll until you are ——

MRS. M. (*again interrupting*). For mercy sake, you need not yell at me so. I am not deaf, and I am sure I heard —— (*Baby cries.*) Yes, there it is again.

JACK. It must be the cat.

MRS. M. Then I will find it and take it out with me.

JACK. Oh, I wouldn't bother. I'll attend to it. Go out. I really fear you will faint if you remain here.

MRS. M. I always liked dumb animals. I shall surely faint if I do not find it.

JACK (*aside*). And I shall surely faint if she does.

(*They have comedy business of trying to find the baby, during which JACK, pretending to aid her, continually gets her away from the fatal spot. At last, from the other side of the room, she notices the bundle under the sofa, and goes toward it.*)

MRS. M. Ah, there it is, under the sofa.

JACK (*placing himself in front of her*). Don't go near it, Alice. I am sure, from the sound, that it must be mad. And if you should touch it, it might bark at you, and then you would have the mumps—ere—the measles—ere—I mean the smallpox — (*Aside.*) Oh, hang it all, what am I saying?

(*She pushes him aside, and going to sofa, draws the baby out.*)

MRS. M. (*facing him with baby in her arms*). So. This is the cat, is it? Now, sir, what have you got to say?

JACK. Do be quiet a moment, Alice, and I will tell you how it happened.

MRS. M. Will you, indeed? Well, go ahead. Let me hear what you have to say.

JACK. On my way home from the office I met a woman who asked me to hold her infant a moment while she arranged her hair. I took it, and away she went, leaving the confounded kid in my arms. It is an old game, and I was a fool to be taken in.

MRS. M. Why didn't you turn it over to the police?

JACK. I really did not think of it then. I was so mortified, and in such fear lest some of my friends should see me, that I made a break for home. But I will take it now.

(*Goes toward her, but she waves him back.*)

MRS. M. Go back. You may desert your lawful wife, but you shall not desert your child.

JACK. My child? Hang it all, what do you mean?

MRS. M. Oh, you need not try to play the innocent any longer. It will not avail you. I see it all now. That letter *was* for you, after all. And this *is* your child. You tried to blind me with your soft words. But it will not work. Your

sins have at last found you out. Oh, you wretch, you villain!

(In her anger she shakes the baby at him, and it begins to cry lustily.)

JACK *(holding out his hands appealingly)*. Can't I make you see?

MRS. M. Yes, take your child. *(She thrusts the baby into his arms, and he starts up stage.)* Stop! Where are you going?

JACK. To the police station, of course.

MRS. M. *(getting pistol from drawer of sideboard)*. Never! While I live, you shall add no more to your already long list of crimes.

JACK *(walking distractedly up and down stage with the crying baby)*. Hang it all. I'm not going to keep it up all night. I wouldn't do it, even if it was my own.

MRS. M. Wouldn't you? *(Laughs scornfully.)* Oh, I do enjoy this. Good-bye, Mr. Marshall. I wish you much joy with your Vivian and your squalling baby. That "hateful blonde" will leave you forever. But I warn you, if you attempt to take it to the police I shall have you arrested.

[Exits with her valise.]

JACK. Well, I am certainly in for it now. Oh, you little wretch, to cause me all this trouble. *(Baby cries.)* Shut up! It won't. Perhaps it is hungry. I'll try it. *(He has comic business of trying to feed the baby with food from the table.)* Confound it all, this won't do. It can't eat. It has no teeth. Blamed funny baby to be born without teeth. Perhaps, though, they have been pulled; its mouth does look red, as if it wore false ones. *(Baby cries.)* Oh, dear, if I could only kill it, choke it, smother it, or drown it. I feel equal to homicide, infanticide, or any other cide. Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

(May introduce more comic business as baby continues to cry.)

Enter MRS. M., at back.

MRS. M. *(laughing)*. For goodness' sake, Jack, what are you doing?

JACK. Doing? Why, I am trying to shut off the vocal pyrotechnics of this human roman candle.

MRS. M. Give it to me. The mother is here. *(She takes the baby and hands it off at back, speaking off.)* Oh, no,

madam, you are mistaken. My husband was not trying to abduct it.

JACK. Trying to abduct it? Well, I guess not. Phew!

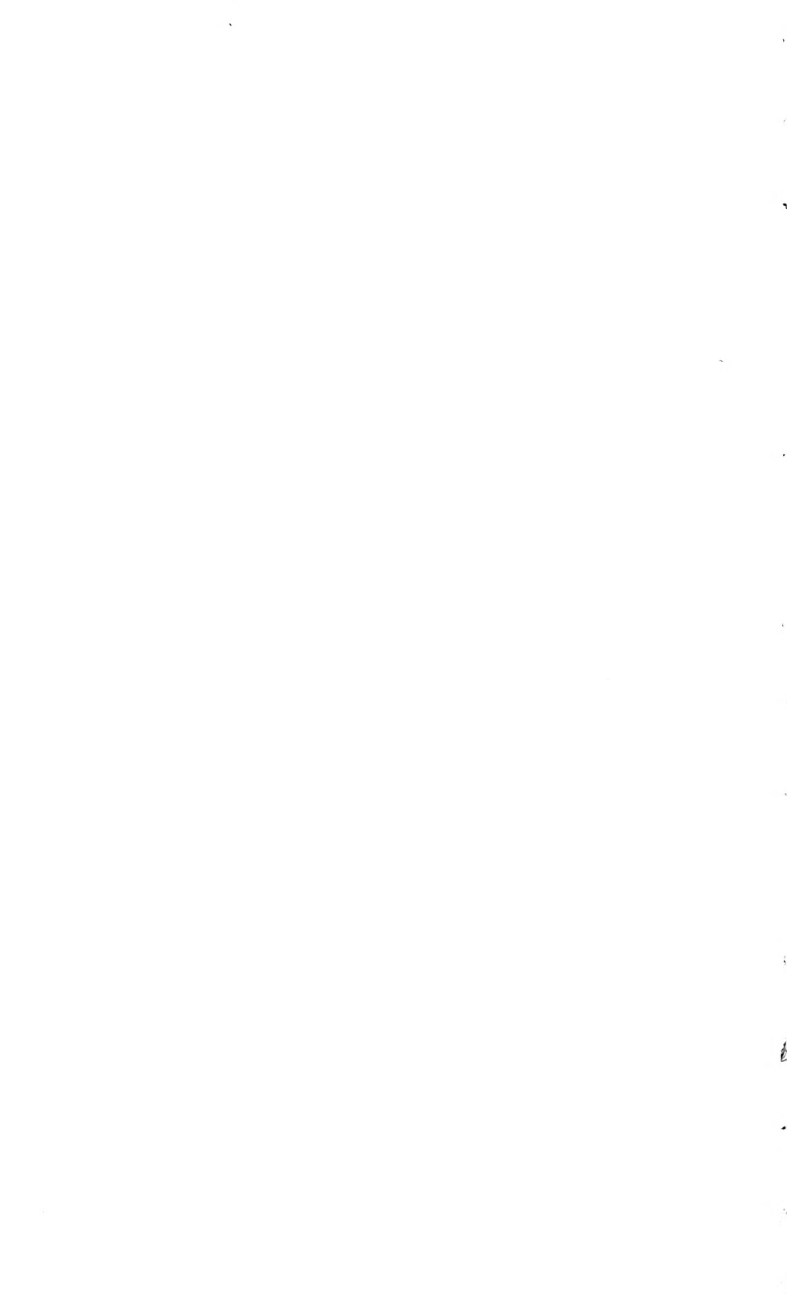
(Fans himself.)

MRS. M. *(coming down to his side)*. Oh, Jack, can you ever forgive me for having doubted you?

JACK. Forgive you? Of course I will. Come, let us forget the whole unpleasant incident.

(They may exit here, or close with a duet.)

CURTAIN



The Baby

A Comic Sketch, Arranged for Two Males

CHARACTERS

BOB WALLACE, *a young man.*

THOMAS WALLACE, *his elderly uncle.*

SCENE.—*The bachelor apartments of the two men.*

Enter TOM at L., at rise. He wears dressing-gown, and carries a letter.

TOM. Well, well, well. I always knew that Bob was a pretty wild sort of boy, but I really did not think him capable of this. (*Reads.*) “My darling Bob:—Please come back, and all will be forgiven. Baby cries for you, and so does your loving wife, Vivian.” Oh, the young villain! He has the audacity to marry without my consent, and then desert his wife. All under my very nose. And the baby, too. Then I am a great-uncle, and he never told me; *me*, who has been his guide and guardian all these years. Oh, the inhuman rascal! I’ll tell him what I think of him when he comes in, and don’t you forget it. [*Exit, R.*]

Enter BOB, at door in back. He carries a baby in long clothes which he handles awkwardly.

BOB (*coming slowly down stage*). Now, this is what I call a mighty fine predicament for a single man to be in. Harnessed to a blooming kid that I don’t even know the parents of. And the most galling part of it is to think that I, Bob Wallace, man of the world and old New Yorker that I am, should be taken in by a game as old as this one. I meet a pretty woman in the park, and she asks me to hold her baby while she gets it a drink. Just like some country lout, I swallow the bait, hook, line and sinker, and take the kid, just to oblige

beauty in distress. Of course she doesn't come back, and there you are. Oh, Bob Wallace, you fool, you idiot! You deserve to get thrashed. Well, perhaps I will get what I deserve when the old man hears of it. By Jove! I won't dare let him see it. I would never hear the last of it. It would be a sweet morsel for him to tell at the club. Ye gods, think of all the fellows pointing me out and calling me "papa"! No, sir; perish the thought. I'll not let him see it. I'll just hide it somewhere until he goes out for his afternoon constitutional, and then I'll take it to the police station. Let me see; what shall I do with it? (*Glances about.*) The very place. (*Puts baby under sofa up stage.*) Now, may kind heaven keep that kid in the land of dreams for the next half hour.

Enter TOM, R.

TOM (*discovering BOB*). So you are here at last, are you?

BOB. Yes, I am here. I only went for my usual stroll in the park.

TOM. You villain!

BOB (*surprised*). Eh?

TOM. You wretch!

BOB. E—h?

TOM. You double-dyed scoundrel!

BOB. E—h?

TOM. You inhuman brute! Burrrrrrr!

BOB. E—h?

TOM. To think that my nephew, my well beloved nephew, would be guilty of such a thing.

BOB (*aside*). By Jove, the old fellow is going crazy. (*Aloud.*) I say, uncle, what is the row?

TOM. What is the row? What is the row? What is the row? You—you dare ask me that? You, who have cunningly won a poor girl's heart, married her, and then deserted her. Oh, it is terrible. And the baby, too.

BOB (*starting and speaking aside*). The baby, too. I wonder what he can mean? Surely he did not see me come in. (*Aloud.*) Now, see here, uncle. You are slightly twisted somewhere. I've warned you several times that you were keeping too late hours for a man of your years. You need a brandy and soda; let me get you one.

TOM. No, I don't need anything but an explanation of this letter.

BOB. What letter?

TOM. This one. (*Hands BOB letter.*) Do you deny that you received it?

BOB (*glancing at the letter, and laughing*). Where did you find this?

TOM. On the table in your room. And you dare to laugh at it, eh? Very funny, isn't it, to read the appeals of your heart-broken wife?

BOB. Nonsense. You are all wrong, uncle. Listen. There is a fellow with the same name as mine at the club. He got into some trouble a while ago, and skipped off to Europe. When this letter came the steward naturally gave it to me.

TOM (*unconvinced*). Oh, very naturally—of course.

BOB. I opened it, but saw at a glance that it did not belong to me.

TOM. Oh, doesn't it?

BOB. Of course not. You know I never had a wife, and what is more, don't want one. While as for babies—(*with a quick glance toward the sofa*) I wish the whole blooming lot were at the North Pole, or ——

(*Baby begins to cry.*)

TOM (*interrupting him*). Hark, what was that?

BOB. I didn't hear anything. (*Baby cries and he continues, speaking louder.*) As I was saying—ere—as I was saying—I mean—to say—ere—s-a-y ——

TOM. Hold on, hold on. What do you think you are? An auctioneer? I'm not more than a mile away, and my hearing is not affected. Besides, I am certain I heard —— (*Baby cries.*) Yes, there it is again.

BOB. It must be the cat.

TOM. Then I will find it. It is surely in pain.

BOB. Oh, I wouldn't bother. It is quite time for your constitutional.

TOM. My constitutional can wait. I always did like dumb animals.

BOB. No, no, don't worry about it. I'll find it.

(*They have comedy business of searching for baby. At last the baby cries.*)

TOM (*discovering baby under sofa*). Ah, there it is, under the sofa.

BOB (*pulling him away*). Don't go near it, uncle. I am sure, by the sound, that it must be mad; and if you should touch it, it might eat you up, and then you'd have smallpox—er—I mean mumps—— (*Aside.*) Oh, hang it all, what am I saying?

TOM (*pushing BOB away, and pulling the baby from under sofa*). Ah, so this is the cat, is it? Now, sir, what have you got to say? (*Sits at table with baby.*)

BOB. Wait, and I'll tell you how it happened.

TOM. Will you? Well, let me hear just how good a story you can invent.

BOB. No invention, I assure you. Just the plain, unvarnished truth. I was sitting in the park this morning, when along comes a woman who asks me to hold her baby while she goes to one of the drinking fountains and gets it a drink. Like a fool, I took it, and of course she didn't return. It is an old game, and I was an ass to get taken in.

TOM. Why didn't you turn it over to the police?

BOB. I really did not think of it then. I was so mortified, and in such mortal fear lest some of the boys should see me, that I made a break for home. But I'll take it now.

(*Goes toward TOM, who waves him back.*)

TOM. Go back. You may desert your wife, but you shall not desert your child. (*Examines baby's clothing.*)

BOB. My child? Hang it all, uncle, what do you mean?

TOM. Oh, you need not try to play innocent any longer. That letter was for you, and this is your child. Witness the damning proof. The initials, V. W. (*Holds up baby's dress.*) What is more natural than for a mother to call her baby after herself? V. stands for Vivian, without a doubt.

BOB. Admitting, of course, that it happens to be that kind of a baby.

TOM. Ummmm—well, we will take that for granted. And the W? That stands for Wallace no matter what the sex may be. Oh, you villain, you deep-dyed scoundrel. (*In his anger he accidentally hits the baby on the head. Baby begins to cry.*) There, there, don't cry, 'ittle tootsy wootsy. Oo unkie has dot oo now.

BOB (*holding out his hands*). Can't I make you understand?

TOM. Yes, take your child. (BOB *starts up stage with baby.*) Hold on, where are you going?

BOB. To the police station.

TOM (*drawing revolver*). No you don't. While your old uncle lives you shall add no more to your long list of crimes.

(*Baby continues to cry, and BOB walks up and down stage. A song may be introduced here.*)

BOB. Hang it all. I am not going to keep this up all day. I wouldn't do it, even if it was my own kid.

TOM. Perhaps it is hungry.

BOB. That's so. I never thought of that. Let's try it.

TOM. I'll get something.

(*Exits R., and returns with large plate of food. Together they have comedy business of trying to force food down the baby's throat. It continues to cry.*)

BOB. Say, this won't do. It hasn't any teeth.

TOM. It hasn't? Mighty funny baby to be born without teeth.

BOB. Perhaps they have been pulled.

(*Baby continues to cry.*)

TOM (*examining baby's mouth*). Yes, I guess they have. Its mouth does look as if it wore false ones. But what are you going to do? We will have all the neighbors in if this keeps up. Shut up! Shut up!

BOB. Suppose I run down-stairs and steal Mrs. Jones' nursing-bottle?

TOM. All right. Go ahead. But hurry. I can't stand this racket very long.

(*BOB exits door in back. TOM may introduce a song or comedy business of trying to quiet the baby.*)

Enter BOB with nursing-bottle.

BOB. Here it is. I managed to get it without any one seeing me.

(*They have comedy business of trying to feed the baby, which only cries louder.*)

TOM (*at last throwing the baby in BOB's arms*). This is

too much ! Take it, choke it, smother it, drown it ; kill it any way you like, only for heaven's sake stop that yelling.

(Claps his hands to his ears and runs from room.)

BOB. Thank heaven ! At last he is gone. Now I can take this infernal kid to the police station. *[Exit.*

CURTAIN

“ Vengeance is Mine ”

A Strong Dramatic Playlet, for Two Males

CHARACTERS

FATHER DUPRI, *a French monk.*

HENRI, COUNT DE VILLMAIS, *a noble.*

SCENE.—DUPRI'S *room in an abbey.* Time.—*France, during the Reign of Terror.* Costumes of the period.

Enter DUPRI at rise of curtain.

DUPRI (*coming slowly down stage while speaking*). Ah, how lovely is nature this morning. The zephyrs, scent laden, rustle the leaves; the birds carol merrily; the very air seems impregnated with a holy calm. In the midst of all these signs of Deity, how can man allow his angry passions to master him? And yet, how out of tune with this beatific harmony of nature is the news from Paris this morning. Everything in turmoil; the fair city in the hands of a lawless mob, ruled by nothing but their own lusts, and bent on pillage, rapine and murder. Versailles in flames, the nobility in peril; aye, even the sacred cloth desecrated; and a wanton of the gutters crowned goddess in the great Notre Dame. The streets reek with blood, and above the bedlam of discordant sounds can be heard the cry of the innocents, sacrificed to the fury of an unthinking, unheeding populace. Ah, God! How long wilt Thou permit poor France to suffer? But I must try and blot out the terrible picture from my mind. (*He goes to a shelf, takes a book at random, and seats himself at a small table c., on which burns a candle before a crucifix.*) I will read the lesson for the day. (*Opens book and reads.*) “Recompense unto no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place

unto wrath; for it is written: 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' saith the Lord." (*Pauses as if in thought.*) Ah, yes, 'tis hard to wait sometimes; but this is our assurance: the Lord will repay. (*He is about to close the book, when a curl of hair drops from the leaves, and he picks it up with trembling fingers.*) What is this? A curl? Why, 'tis the one that Madaline gave me when I left for Prussia. (*Pause.*) Ten years ago. It does not seem so long since I kissed her blush-mantled cheek, and with my sabre at my side left her, to win glory and honor on the tented field. How well I remember the day. We plighted our troth and parted. I to wear the uniform of France's victorious hosts; she to wait patiently for my coming. My coming? (*Starts to his feet in excitement.*) Yes, I returned. Returned as I had promised. But she? Ah, a villain, the proud and haughty Count de Villmais, like a serpent, had entered our Eden and stolen away our Paradise. Aye, stolen away the fairest flower that ever graced the world. (*Fiercely.*) Stole it! Blighted it! Crushed it! Killed it! How I longed to clutch the dastard's fair white throat; to feel him gasp for breath; to hear him supplicate in vain; to clench until he hung a limp weight in my arms, and then hurl him from me dead, dead, dead! How I longed to plunge my sabre into his vile heart, and watch his life blood leap forth in pursuit of the blade! (*Sinks, overcome, in chair.*) But no. Wiser councils prevailed, and with nothing left in life I turned to the Church. She took me in, comforted me, healed my wounds. Ah, I had fondly thought so. But now—now the sight of that curl, the memory of my long lost love! Oh, I could — (*Pauses abruptly, clasps his hands and faces the crucifix.*) Oh, Thou Divine One, give me strength to forget. Aye, to forget and to forgive. (*Buries his face in his hands on the table.* *Enter HENRI. He is dressed as a noble of the period, but his clothing is in disarray and a long cloak covers him. He glances about in great fear, and discovering DUPRI, comes quickly to his side, falls on his knees and clasps the priest's hand, which hangs at his side. DUPRI, discovering HENRI, starts to his feet.*) Eh? Why, my poor man, who are you; and what are you doing here?

HENRI (*staggering to his feet*). Oh, good father, save me. Save me from the mob who would take my life. Everywhere they are seeking the lives of those who boast of noble blood. I am of that class, and they too seek my life. They have marked me for execution. But I have escaped them, and am come

here to seek shelter. Here, under the wing of the Church. Surely they will respect God's house?

DUPRI. Alas, I fear not. In their unreasoning fury, clergy and laity are alike their common victims.

HENRI. Still, you will not desert me? Oh, father, don't—don't turn me adrift among those ravening wolves. The mob is all about. To leave here would be but to cast myself into their hands. No, I will not. Rather than fall into the fingers of those hellish fiends, I will——

(He draws a dagger from his belt and attempts to stab himself. DUPRI grasps his upraised hand.)

DUPRI. Stop, man! What would you do? Know you not that it is written: “Thou shalt not kill;” even thyself? Be calm and I will aid you.

(Takes the dagger from HENRI and lays it on table.)

HENRI. Thanks, thanks, good father.

DUPRI. But be not too sanguine. It is as you say. The mob is all about us. They may track you here at any moment.

HENRI *(in fear)*. And then?

DUPRI. Then? Such is their fury, that God's house, God's minister, aye, God's holy image, would not restrain their fiendishness.

HENRI *(in an agony)*. And then, then? What then?

DUPRI *(calmly)*. Then we can only die together. *(HENRI bows his head as if in despair.)* Come, my poor man. Let us hope for the best; but let us not forget the danger, and be prepared for the worst.

HENRI *(with a shudder)*. I—I—cannot think of death.

DUPRI *(calmly)*. 'Tis hard, I know. But we must all face it some time.

HENRI. But I have sinned.

DUPRI. So have we all. 'Tis the common heritage of prince and pauper alike. Do not despair. Look up. Behold the Cross. The Image that speaks to us of salvation and absolution. That beckons us onward and upward. That bids the weary sinner repent, the penitent one rejoice.

HENRI *(glancing up at the crucifix, then falling on his knees in front of DUPRI)*. Father, hear my confession. I was born in the fair valley of the Oiselle. There, nurtured by a fond father and indulgent mother, surrounded by friends kind and good, I grew to man's estate. Then I went to Paris. Ah,

that was my undoing. Would that I had always remained on the vineyard-clad hills of Montagnic ! But I came to Paris ; Paris, so fair and yet so false ; Paris, which, like the Lorelei of the Rhine, whispers its siren song, and lures the poor traveler to destruction. Thus did Paris lure me on, and in the mad gaiety of the city I forgot the sweet days of my innocent childhood ; forgot the old father whose pride I was. Forgot the fond mother whose prayers were ever raised in behalf of her wayward son. Forgot friends, manhood, honor, everything, and plunged headlong into the maelstrom of vice, thinking nothing but to satisfy the cravings of a sinful heart, caring naught if those cravings were but satisfied.

DUPRI (*soothingly*). Poor man. Yours is not an uncommon life-story. The fair city holds many human wrecks, who were once proud, honest men.

HENRI. But listen, good father. I was more despicable than they. Not content to sink myself into the black depths of infamy and despair, I dragged another with me—a woman—as pure as the snow that falls from out the shaken mantle of winter. I saw her innocence, and lusted for it. Like another Mephistopheles, I wooed her. For a while she resisted ; but ah, the devil triumphed at last, and I held her in my arms. (*Pause.*) Then, when the prize was won, I cared for it no longer, and —

DUPRI (*who has slowly changed to excited interest*). Yes, yes, man. Go on.

HENRI. I deserted her. After luring her to the turbulent waters, I left her to sink. After dragging her to the precipice, I left her to fall. Oh, Madaline —

DUPRI (*excitedly*). Who ? Who ? Speak, man ; what name did you utter ?

HENRI. The name of the poor innocent whom I lured to ruin and death : Madaline LaRue.

DUPRI (*gripping his shoulder fiercely*). And you—you—are —

HENRI. Henri, Count de Villmais.

DUPRI. My God ! And after all these years an avenging Deity has placed you in my hands. You fiend !

(HENRI, in fear, attempts to rise to his feet, but DUPRI catches him by the throat and forces him back to his knees.)

HENRI. Help ! Help ! Oh, father, who are you ?

DUPRI. Who am I? Who am I? Look upon me. Once Robert Morrill, captain of His Majesty's guards. Once happy, honored, ambitious; secure in a pure woman's love. Now, with ambition dead, my heart torn, happiness fled—and you—you—are the serpent.

HENRI. Oh, father, have mercy.

DUPRI. Mercy? Mercy, dog? You talk of mercy? 'Twere an insult to the Almighty to show you mercy. No, no. Justice has at last found you out; and I—I, foul wretch, am commissioned to mete to you your punishment.

HENRI. Oh, spare me, spare me, and I will make amends.

DUPRI (*speaking with loathing*). Cease your blasphemies. Can you once more place the mantle of purity upon the cheek of my long lost love? Can you give back the life you hurled to despair and destruction? Can you absolve the soul that now perchance rests in torments? Aye, can you recall the ten bitter years that have sapped the springs of life from my sturdy manhood, and left me but a withered branch? No, no, no. Make amends? Thou fool. Say your last prayer, repeat your last Paternoster.

(*He catches up the dagger, and holds it threateningly over the cowering HENRI.*)

HENRI (*meekly*). The Bible then. (DUPRI *hands him the open book on the table, and, still kneeling, he begins to read.*) “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written: ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ saith the Lord.”

(*He slowly closes the book, kisses it, and offers it to DUPRI.*

DUPRI *does not see him. His face depicts the struggle going on in his breast.*)

HENRI (*still clutching the book, he bows his head*). Now I am ready. Strike. (*A pause; the blow does not fall, and he glances up at DUPRI in surprise and renewed hope.*) What? You do not strike? Ah, pity, pity, it is not dead. You will spare me?

DUPRI (*slowly lowering the dagger, while speaking as if to himself*). “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” saith the Lord. (*Pause.*) Yes, I will spare you.

HENRI. May heaven bless you. (*Clasps DUPRI's hand.*) But hark! What is that? The mob is coming, and we are lost. (*Springs to his feet.*)

DUPRI (*calmly*). Perhaps not. Have courage. (*He hurriedly takes off his cassock, and wraps it around HENRI.*) There is a secluded path at the back of the abbey. It leads through the cemetery and to the hills beyond. From there you can easily cross the borders. Be brave and cautious, and you will escape.

HENRI. But you? My good friend, my saviour? You ——

DUPRI. I will stay and hold them while you fly.

HENRI. Oh, father, how can I thank you for ——

DUPRI. Hush. They are coming. There is no time for thanks now. Go! (*He hastily pushes HENRI off at a side door.*) He is gone. Gone. He who despoiled me, blighted my hopes, and blasted my life. Ah, well, God will repay. (*Noise heard outside as of mob beating on the doors.*) Stop! What would you do? Beware the vengeance of heaven.

VOICE (*outside*). We seek that noble rogue, the Count de Villmais.

DUPRI (*after a pause*). He is not here.

VOICE (*outside*). But we saw him come here. Open, or we will batter down the doors.

(*Noise of mob battering down doors and shots being fired.*)

DUPRI. Never. Back, back, I say. Do not pollute God's holy temple with your unhallowed feet. Back, I say, or I —— (*A shot is fired. DUPRI clutches at his breast, from which blood flows.*) Cowards! (*He reels and falls down c.*) Thank God, the Count is safely away by this time. And I? I gave my life for his. How dark it grows. I cannot see. And yet—yes, there is a light. (*Looks upward.*) It beckons me on. And there—oh, joy, oh, happiness complete—there is Madaline. Madaline—my life, my love, my all. Yes, loved one, I am coming. Peace at last. (*A pause.*) And vengeance? Truly vengeance belongs to God.

(*Feebly makes the sign of the cross, and dies as mob enters.*)

CURTAIN

Dr. Dobbs' Assistant

A Comic Sketch for Six Males

(It can be played by two males, one taking the part of Travel Stayned, and the other playing Dr. Dobbs and all the patients.)

CHARACTERS

TRAVEL STAYNED, *a tramp*.

DR. DOBBS.

HIRAM ONDERDUNK, *a hayseed*.

IKEY, *a Jew*.

OLD MAID.

HANS STOUTERBACH, *a Dutchman*.

SCENE.—*Office of Dr. Dobbs.*

Enter DOBBS, at rise of curtain, to lively music.

DOBBS (*speaking off*). All right, all right. I'll be right down. John, bring the auto around to the door at once. (*Comes down stage.*) There it is again. A hurry call, right in the middle of my office hours. Patient dying, so they say. I'll wager that it is only a case of big head, or perhaps a bit of dyspepsia. But then, Banker Stone is too good a man to lose from my lists. If I don't humor him, some other doctor would. But it is annoying, to say the least. If I only had some one to look after my office practice while I was out. (*Goes to table and begins filling a small satchel with bottles. Knock heard off stage.*) Come in. Another patient, I suppose.

Enter TRAV. He is a typical tramp in dress and manner.

TRAV. Good-morning.

DOBBS (*without looking up*). Good-morning; what can I do for you?

TRAV. Good-morning.

DOBBS (*without looking up*). Good-morning, good-morning. What is the matter?

TRAV. Good-morning.

DOBBS (*turning angrily*). Good-morning. I said good-morning.

TRAV. So did I.

DOBBS. Well, what do you want? What ails you?

TRAV. Well, I feel holler here (*indicating his stomach*), and I'm empty here (*slapping his pocket*), and—and—well, I guess that is about all.

DOBBS. Oh, I see. You are hungry and have no money, eh?

TRAV. Gee, but you are a smart doctor, to guess what is the matter so quick.

DOBBS (*aside*). I have an idea. (*Aloud.*) Do you know anything about medicines?

TRAV. Well, I know that castor oil is good for burns, and Pritcher cries for children's Astoria, Long Island, and—and—let's see if there is anything else I know.

(*Scratches his head thoughtfully.*)

DOBBS. Well, I'll give you a chance. I need an assistant to look after my office calls while I am out. Now I will tell you how to act as briefly as I can. When a patient comes in, you ask him to tell you his symptoms. Then you look at his tongue, feel his pulse, time it, and take his temperature. Next you diagnose —

TRAV. Dye his nose?

DOBBS. No, no. You diagnose his case. If you think his lungs are affected, try the stethoscope.

TRAV. I see; you look into his lungs with a telescope.

DOBBS. No, no; stethoscope. If he is of sedentary habits —

TRAV. Yes, if he has got the dairy habit —

DOBBS. Sedentary, sedentary. Perhaps a little massage will do him good.

TRAV. Bologna?

DOBBS. Bologna? What do you mean?

TRAV. Didn't you say to give him a little sausage?

DOBBS. No, no. A massage, to stimulate his nerves.

TRAV. Stimulate him? Oh, yes, now I know. You mean treat him to a glass of whiskey. Say, Doc, I'm one of those sed-in-the-dary fellers, myself.

DOBBS. Do be quiet and listen. If you suspect poison, use an emetic.

TRAV. Now what is the use of using an attic? For him to die in?

DOBBS. No, no. An emetic, or the stomach-pump. Now, here are some remedies (*indicating bottles on table*), which you will find efficacious in alleviating —

TRAV. Hey?

DOBBS. I say here are some remedies which you will find efficacious in alleviating pain. (*Speaks off.*) All right, John. I'm coming. (*To TRAV.*) I'll have to leave you for a little while. Now do the best you can.

(*Catches up satchel and exits hurriedly.*)

TRAV. Go ahead, Doc, don't mind me. I'll live through it, even if the patients don't. Well, say (*looking about room*), hain't dis the best ever? I certainly fell into a soft snap dis time. But I must live up to my position. (*Takes off his own ragged coat and puts on a smoking-jacket.*) Dis will look better. Now, doctor, have a cigar? Tanks, I don't care if I do. (*Takes a cigar from box on table and lights it.*) And now a nip of whiskey, doctor? Well, really, I don't indulge as a rule, but of course if you insist —

(*Pours and drinks from a bottle on table. Then sits and puts his feet on table.*)

Enter HIRAM at back. He is dressed as a farmer.

HIRAM. Good-morning. Is the doctor in?

TRAV. No—ere—I mean yes. Of course he is. Can't you see me, or are you blind? What is the matter with you?

HIRAM. I don't know what is the matter. That is why I cum here.

TRAV. Ah, now that is very bright of you. I wonder I didn't guess it myself. Well, sit down and let me see your tongue. (*HIRAM sits and TRAV., pretending to look at his tongue, pulls from his mouth about a foot of red flannel, cut like a tongue.*) Horrible, horrible. I'll have to scrape it.

(*He takes a large file from the table and pretends to scrape the tongue.*)

HIRAM. Oh, murder, is that all?

TRAV. All? Why, my dear feller, I've only just com-

menced. I must take your temperature. (*Pretends to shove a large wooden thermometer down HIRAM's throat.*) Hully gee! Six hundred and seventy-eight in the shade. Say, where were you last night? On the Bowery?

HIRAM. Why, yes. How did you guess it?

TRAV. Brains, my dear sir, brains. Now let me feel your pulse. (*Takes a small alarm clock from table. As he does so it begins to ring.*) Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

HIRAM. Hey?

TRAV. Oh, I am talking to this clock. It makes so much noise that I can't hear your pulse. Great Scott, what a pulse!

HIRAM. Oh, doctor, I hain't so very bad off, are I? Gosh all hemlock, if I wus ter die right here —

TRAV. Now, don't you worry about that. I'll keep you alive until you get outside. (*HIRAM groans. TRAV. sits at table and writes.*) Let me see. This is a very bad case of rinktum jinktum. But we will see what can be done for you. Take Tenderloinous—one night. Boweryitus—one night. Champagne—one quart. Gold—one brick. Mix thoroughly, take and then go home to Squashville and make your will. (*Rises.*) There you are, my dear sir.

(*Hands paper to HIRAM.*)

HIRAM. Oh, thankee, doctor. How much?

TRAV. Ummmmmm, well. You look so much like my dear dead brother that I'll only charge you five dollars.

HIRAM. Oh, thankee. (*Gives money.*) Good-bye, doctor. If ye ever cuni ter Pollyopolis, jest ye drap in the fust red house arter passin' Wortendyke's mill, on the road ter Griggsby's Corners. Thet's my house, and me and the old woman and the gals will give ye a hearty welcome. Good-bye.

[*Exit.*]

TRAV. Good-bye. Five cold bones. This is as easy as being a political boss. I wonder if the doctor will want any of this money? No, of course not. Perish the thought. I was hired to look after his office patients, so I will also look after his office patients' money. Ah, doctor, have a cigar. (*Takes another cigar from box and lights it.*) And now how about a little stimulant, doctor? Well, really I could not think of indulging again so soon—ere—but—of course—if you insist — (*Takes another drink of whiskey, then seats himself at table as before.*) Now, I wonder who will be the next? Come along, he, she or it, I am ready for you.

Enter IKEY, a typical Jew make-up.

IKEY. Good-mornin', doctor.

TRAV. Hello, Ikey.

IKEY. Oh, vat an intelligent doctor. How did you know that my name vas Ikey?

TRAV. Brains, my dear sir, brains. But what is the matter with you?

IKEY. Oh, but I haf sich a pain in my side. I tink I haf got appen dictus.

TRAV. All right, we'll look you over. I'll take your temperature. And now your pulse. (*He takes IKEY'S watch from his pocket to time pulse, and then puts it in his own pocket.*) Now, your tongue. You say you have a pain? Where is it?

IKEY. Here. (*Points to his side.*)

TRAV. Yes, yes. A bad case. Your appen-de-sizzers has got to come out.

IKEY (*in alarm*). Oh, vill it hurt?

TRAV. Not a bit. Come, up you go. (*He lifts IKEY on table.*) Will you have gas?

IKEY. Oooooo. Does it cost any more?

TRAV. Sure. A dollar a thousand feet. It will take about ten thousand for you, I guess.

IKEY. Ten dollars? Den I von't haf it.

TRAV. Just as you say. It's all the same to me.

(He takes a large pair of shears from table.)

IKEY. Oh, let me up. I can't stand it.

TRAV. Well, lay still then. Nobody is asking you to stand it. (*He jams IKEY'S hat over his eyes, and cuts off the pocket of his trousers with the shears.*) There, now, don't you feel better?

IKEY (*getting slowly off table*). Yas, I guess so. But vat is der charge?

(Is reaching for his pocket, when TRAV. stops him.)

TRAV. Not a cent to you, my dear sir. Not a cent. Wait for a prescription, and then you can go home. (*Sits and writes.*)

IKEY (*rubbing his hands in glee*). Oh, vat a nice man. Such an intelligent doctor. Not a cent fur the operation.

TRAV. (*writing*). "Eat five pounds of motzas daily, and keep away from fires." There.

IKEY. Oh, you good man. You fine doctor.

TRAV. That's all right, my dear sir. Here is your prescription. You see, I am in this business for my health. (*He pushes IKEY off and returns down stage.*) Well, say—I'd rather be a doctor than—than—well, even old John D. Let me see. First patient, five dollars. Second patient—(*counting money from IKEY's pocket*) fifteen dollars and three cents. I wonder what he had that three cents for? To pay me, no doubt. Oh, well, I won't worry about that. Now, if only a few more will drop in before the doctor gets back, I'll be a millionaire. I wonder how long he has been gone? (*Takes out IKEY's watch.*) Well, if I didn't forget to give Ikey back his watch! Oh, well, I won't worry about that. (*Laughs.*) I wonder what he will say when he gets home and finds that I have amputated his pocketbook? Oh, well, I won't worry about that. (*At table.*) Ah, my dear doctor, have a cigar. Why, certainly. And now just a nip of that which intoxicates but also inebriates. (*Same business as before with cigar and whiskey.*) No, no, I really couldn't think of indulging again. Still—of course, if you insist. (*Sits.*) Now we are ready for the next one. (*A pause.*) Surely my good luck isn't going to desert me so soon. (*At door, looking off.*) Ah, no, I thought not. And hully gee, it's a woman.

Enter OLD MAID.

OLD MAID. Good-morning, sir. Is this the doctor?

TRAV. Yes, madam.

OLD MAID. Oh, you naughty man. I am not a madam—ere—that is, not yet.

TRAV. Oh, you hain't a madam yet, eh?

OLD MAID. No—but—te-he—I'm willing to be.

TRAV. (*running quickly to calendar hanging on wall and glancing at it; speaking aside.*) Thank heavens this isn't leap year. (*Aloud.*) But now, my dear lady, what can I do for you?

OLD MAID (*aside*). He called me dear. Oh, the lovely man. (*Aloud.*) Why, sir, I—I—feel sick.

TRAV. Where?

OLD MAID. I hardly know.

TRAV. Let me see your teeth. (*He opens her mouth.*) Old age, I guess.

OLD MAID (*indignantly*). Sir!

TRAV. Yes, you ought to have died twenty years ago.

OLD MAID. What ! Before I was born ?

TRAV. (*aside*). Before she was born. Oh, that is a good one. But I suppose I might as well get a little money out of her. (*Aloud.*) Hold on, let me feel your pulse. Twenty-nine. Now your temperature. Hully gee, it's down to zero.

OLD MAID (*aside*). Oh, isn't he just too lovely for anything ! (*Aloud.*) Can you do anything for me, dear doctor ?

TRAV. Oh, yes, your case is easy. (*Sits and writes.*) "Catch one man, and chain him up so he can't get away." There you are. Five dollars, please.

OLD MAID. Thank you, dear doctor. I would willingly pay twice as much if you can only cure me.

TRAV. (*rising*). Well, you can make it ten dollars then.

OLD MAID (*giving money*). Good-morning, dear doctor. I will call again.

TRAV. Good-morning, good-morning. (*Bows her off stage.*) I hope she kicks the bucket before she comes back here. Now, wouldn't she freeze ye ? I'll bet that thermometer has got ice on it. Oh, well, I won't worry about that. I've got thirty dollars, three cents and a gold watch. That isn't so bad. Why, it is better than picking pockets. More refined and legal, too. It is almost as good as being a meat packer. Ah, dear doctor, have a cigar. How well you know that I cannot refuse the weed. And now, doctor, I'm going to press a little stimulant on you. What ? Never, never. My constitution would not stand it. Still—if you will just make it a toast to my future good fortune — Well, that is worth toasting—so if you insist — (*Same business with cigar and whiskey as before.*) I guess my time is almost up. I wish he was going to be gone all day. If he wus, I'd buy the Standard Oil Company or the Steel Trust by night. (*Listens.*) Ah, that must be him coming now. (*Looks off.*) No, it is another patient. Hurrah, more good luck.

Enter HANS. He is very stout.

HANS. Good-mornin' I don't know.

TRAV. You don't, eh ?

HANS. How you vas alreatty ?

TRAV. Yes, I'm all ready. What is the matter with you ?

HANS. I'm too fat, ain'd it ?

TRAV. That's wot you are.

HANS. I vant sometings to reductions de wait.

TRAV. Ummmm. Have you tried the coal dealers? They know how to reduce the weight.

HANS. No, I didn't try dose.

TRAV. Well, let me see your tongue. Now your pulse. (*Takes HANS's watch, and transfers it to his own pocket.*) Yes, you are a corporosity. The first thing you know the Sherman Anti-Trust will be after you. You need your corporation reduced. You had better see Ping Pong Morgan. He's good at reducing corporations. But let me see. Ah, I have it. I'll pump you out.

HANS. Ach, mein Gott!

TRAV. Yes, yes, got to do it. The only thing that will save you. (*He throws HANS on floor, gets a large hand pump, and sitting astride HANS, pretends to put the tube in his mouth and work the handle.*) There, do you feel better?

HANS. I feel vorse.

TRAV. (*same business*). Feel better now?

HANS. No; vorse, vorse. I'm getting pigger.

TRAV. Well, we'll try it again. (*Same business. HANS explodes.*) Hully Gee, what have I done now? (*Gets up.*) Well, he wanted to be thinner, and I guess he got what he wanted. Five dollars, please. (*Pause.*) Ten dollars, please. (*Pause.*) Fifteen dollars, please. (*Pause.*) He must be dead. Twenty dollars, please. Say, are you dead? (*Pause.*) He is, sure enough. Twenty-five dollars, please. Fifty dollars, please. (*He takes HANS's pocketbook and opens it.*) Sixty dollars here. Well, he is dead, so I might as well keep the change. (*He drags HANS off stage and returns.*) Now it was too bad that I killed him. But it's only what doctors are doing every day, so I won't worry about that. Still it sorter jars on a feller's nerves until he gets used to it. Hark! I'll bet that is the doctor coming now. It won't do for me to be seen here after what has happened. So I guess I'll light out. (*To audience.*) But before I go, I would just like to say that if there is any doctor in the audience who is in need of an assistant, I shall be most happy to serve him.

CURTAIN

(*Note.—The blowing up of HANS is easily achieved by connecting the pump with the tube of a rubber balloon that is concealed beneath his loose waistcoat, and inflating during dialogue, as indicated, to the bursting point.*)

For Sake of a Thousand

A Comedy Sketch for Two Males and
One Female

CHARACTERS

HARRY HALE, *an artist.*

MRS. HALE, *his wife.*

JACK DOUGLAS, *a friend of HALE.*

SCENE.—*Apartment of the Hales. Not very elaborately furnished. Breakfast, rather meagre, set on table for two. Easel with half-finished painting on it, up R. Stand up L., with glasses.*

Enter MRS. H., a young matron, at rise. She is dressed in a plain morning gown or wrapper. Can introduce a song. Then she goes to door at R., and knocks.

MRS. H. Come, come, Harry. You lazy fellow. Are you going to get up to-day, or do you expect to have your breakfast served in bed?

HALE (*outside*). I'm coming, my dear. I'm coming.

Enters from R. He has on a dressing-gown.

MRS. H. Still half asleep. I do believe you could sleep past doomsday.

HALE. If I could only sleep past rent day, I'd be satisfied. What have we got for breakfast?

MRS. H. Well, here is some Oat-wheat-a to begin on.

HALE. Oat what a?

MRS. H. No, Oatwheata.

HALE. What is that?

MRS. H. A bran new breakfast food.

HALE (*sniffing at table*). A bran new breakfast food, eh? You mean a new bran breakfast food. It looks like bran. If it isn't sawdust. What ever possessed you to get that stuff?

MRS. H. I didn't buy it. It is a sample package.

HALE. Sample package, eh? What in thunder—

MRS. H. Now, Harry, don't get angry. You know we are poor—

HALE. Yes, I am painfully well aware of the fact. I have the unpleasant truth thrust upon me every day.

MRS. H. And when one is poor—

HALE. One ought to be satisfied with sawdust, eh? (*Kisses her.*) Yes, yes, I know it. There, there, now don't mind me, my dear. I am an old bear, I know. (*Sits at table.*)

MRS. H. (*also seated*). Well—ere—no, you are not *old*. But here are two letters, just arrived in the morning mail. I am sure they must contain some good news. Perhaps they are orders.

HALE (*taking up letters*). Orders? Huh! Why, it has been so long since I got an order for a picture that I've forgotten what one looks like. Well, here is one letter that isn't an order.

MRS. H. No?

HALE. No. It is from Aunt Martha.

MRS. H. Aunt Martha? Who is she?

HALE. My only near relative. A spinster, with a barrel of money, and no one on whom to lavish her gold—save yours truly.

MRS. H. (*delighted*). Oh, how lovely.

HALE. Ummm, well, no doubt it will be, some day. That is, if she ever takes it into her head to die; which, however, doesn't seem likely. She has the most obstinately strong constitution I ever saw.

MRS. H. Don't you suppose she would help us if we asked her?

HALE. Never. I know her only too well from past experience. She would call me a beggar, and in all probability, leave her wealth to some charity that isn't as deserving as I am. No, we can only live in hope that some day she will decide to shuffle off this mortal coil. In the meantime, there is no use in wasting time reading her effusions. I know them by heart. My dear nephew—I am well—hope you are—trust you find painting successful—keep at it, dear boy, and some day you will be famous. Oh, yes, I know her style. Have read such rot a hundred times. Bah!

(*Tosses the letter, unopened, on the table.*)

MRS. H. Well, the other one may be better. That is from Boston.

HALE. From Boston? (*Opens other letter.*) I wonder who it can be from? (*Glances at letter.*) Thunder and Mars!

MRS. H. (*anxiously*). What is the matter now?

HALE. Matter? Everything is the matter. This letter is from Jack Douglas. And he says he is coming to visit me.

MRS. H. Well, we can only do as well as our poverty will allow.

HALE. Poverty? Nonsense. Listen. Before I met you I belonged to a bachelor's club.

MRS. H. Ugh! Horrid things, bachelor's clubs.

HALE. I think so myself now. But that was before I met you. Every member was bound by a terrible oath never to marry.

MRS. H. It couldn't have been so very terrible since you did not keep it.

HALE. Ah, but that was before I met you. Furthermore, if any member did have the temerity to violate the rules, he was fined a thousand dollars, which went into the club's funds for a jollification at the poor devil's expense, and he was forever ostracized from the society. Now, getting kicked out of the club doesn't bother me a little bit. But a thousand dollars! Where would I get it? The club is in Boston; I met you in Chicago. We were married very quietly and came here to live. I never told any one of our marriage, and the club knows nothing of it.

MRS. H. And now?

HALE. Now, Douglas—the president of the society and a veritable woman hater—is coming to visit me.

MRS. H. What shall we do?

HALE. Can't you go away somewhere?

MRS. H. I have no friends nearer than Chicago.

HALE. Hum. The money I have wouldn't take you farther than Hoboken.

MRS. H. Then I cannot even go to a hotel?

HALE. No.

MRS. H. I might spend the day in the park.

HALE. Yes, but hang it all, he may stay a week.

MRS. H. Then what shall we do?

HALE (*after thinking*). Well, I have an idea.

MRS. H. What is it?

HALE. I don't like it. And yet—for the sake of a thousand —

MRS. H. Yes, yes.

HALE. You might put on my clothing, and —

MRS. H. And be a man? Horrors!

HALE. But think of the thousand.

MRS. H. I know. But the—the—clothes—the—the—pants. Why, I—I—never wore such things in my life.

HALE. That is no criterion. You wouldn't be the first wife that wore the trousers. Still, if you do not like it —

MRS. H. Is there no other way out of it?

HALE. None that I can see.

MRS. H. Well, then—for the sake of a thousand—I'll do it.

HALE (*delighted*). Bravo. What a dear, good wifey you are. We will outwit the old fox yet. But hurry. He may be here at any moment. Fix up the best you can.

MRS. H. And what will you do? You know you have but one suit of clothing.

HALE. Me? Oh, never mind me. I'll keep on this dressing-gown, and pretend that I am indisposed. Hurry. But wait. Let me see. I'll call you Lord Chauncey Pembroke. I've read that name in some novel. That will do nicely. English lords are always effeminate.

MRS. H. The very thing. I begin to enter into the spirit of the lark.

HALE (*grimly*). Lark? Yes, it would be a great one if he should find it out, although I don't believe we would appreciate the joke.

MRS. H. He won't find it out. Trust me for that. I'll fix him, the old woman-hater! But good-bye now. Mrs. Hale will leave you. Lord Chauncey Pembroke will be back presently.

[*Exit, R.*]

HALE. Somehow I fear we are courting destruction. But it is the only way I can see out of the difficulty. (*Picks up other letter.*) Oh, Aunt Martha, if you were only a little more liberal with your gold, I would not have to resort to such questionable subterfuges in order to maintain my position. (*Drops letter and rising, goes up stage to window.*) A carriage. I'll wager it is he now. Yes. Jack Douglas. It is he. (*At door R., calling off.*) Bessie, Bessie, how are you getting on? Eh? You are having trouble with the—yes, yes, of course they button in front. Be careful now. He is coming.

(*Knock at back, and HALE opens door. Enter JACK, a well set up man of middle age. A typical man of the world. Dressed well and carries a valise.*) Good-morning, Douglas.

JACK. Hello, old chap. Got my letter, I suppose?

HALE. Yes; I just received it this morning.

JACK. Had to run in to New York on business, and thought I might as well spend a few days with you.

HALE (*aside*). Days? Ye gods! (*Aloud.*) I am delighted, I'm sure.

JACK. I knew you would be. Ah, breakfast ready for us, eh?

HALE. Ere—no. The fact is I have a friend stopping with me just now.

JACK. A friend, eh? I hope he is one of the boys; not a skirt follower.

HALE. Oh, he is all right.

JACK. Good! I shall be pleased to meet him.

HALE. Here he is. (*Enter MRS. H. She is in male attire.*) Let me introduce you. Lord Chauncey Pembroke, of London; Mr. Jack Douglas, of Boston.

MRS. H. (*affecting a cockney style of speech*). Cha'med to meet you, don't cher know.

JACK. Same here, old fellow. (*They shake hands.*) Harry's friends are mine, always. Now, go ahead with your breakfast, I'm not hungry. (*HALE and MRS. H. sit at table.*) I'll look on. Or no—by Jove, I'll have a drink. (*Takes bottle from valise.*) Here, Harry my boy, is some of the rare old stuff we used to drink. I brought a bottle along for your especial benefit. Any glasses? Ah, yes. (*Gets glasses from stand.*) Have a glass, me lud? It's the finest, strongest whiskey this side of Olympus.

MRS. H. Ooooo.

JACK (*pouring*). What? Don't you drink, me boy?

MRS. H. (*looking helplessly at HALE, who nods his head vigorously*). Ere—yes—occasionally.

JACK. Well, you will drink more than just "occasionally" after you have been with Hale a while. Why, the way he lushes is —

HALE (*interrupting*). Oh, I say, Douglas, how do you like my new quarters?

JACK. Capital. I particularly admired the maid who opened the door for me. She is a regular Diana. I don't wonder that you moved here. Does she wait on you?

HALE (*angrily*). No.

JACK. That is too bad. Still, I suppose she is not averse to a quiet little supper once in a while? Do you remember when —

HALE. Yes, yes, of course. Here is to a jolly visit.

(*Offers toast and all drink, MRS. H. with grimaces.*)

JACK. Bravo. I tell you that is the stuff to warm the heart. Do you remember when —

HALE. Of course. But I say, old man, just put your grip in my room.

JACK. I will. Is this it? (*Takes valise and exits R.*)

HALE. No, no. Too late. Confound it. He has gone in there, and will discover your clothing.

MRS. H. (*rising*). Oh, Harry, this is not going to be the lark I thought it would. I—ere—feel—dizzy.

HALE (*rising*). I'm deuced sorry, Bessie, but we have got to see the thing through now. For the sake of a thousand, you know.

Enter JACK, R. He is holding up MRS. H.'s dress.

JACK (*laughing*). Oh, you old villain. You haven't reformed one bit. But I've caught you this time. (*MRS. H. staggers back.*) Why, what is the matter, me lud? Is it possible that you are not used to petticoats? Well, you are in the right kind of company to learn, then. Why, I remember when —

HALE (*anxiously interrupting*). I say, Douglas, there's a good fellow. Just take a stroll for an hour or two, will you? I am awfully busy with a picture that I am painting on order.

JACK (*laughing*). Oh, of course you are. Why don't you own up and admit that you want to get us out of the house so you can find the person who was inside this, eh? You sly dog. Only up to your old tricks again. Why, I remember when —

HALE. Confound you, Douglas; what I say is the truth.

JACK. Don't say another word. We know you. Have a cigarette, Pembroke. (*Offers case to MRS. H. She glances helplessly toward HALE, who nods vigorously. With a gesture of resignation she takes a cigarette.*) Oh, they won't kill you. Great Scott! what a green one you are. I knew some Britishers were effeminate, but —

MRS. H. Oh, that's all right.

JACK. Have a light? (*Offers her match.*)

HALE (*aside*). This will drive me mad.

MRS. H. I—I—don't think I'll smoke just now.

JACK. Just as you say. But come on now, me lud. Let us leave Hale. It is really too bad that we interrupted his painting. (*Laughs.*)

HALE (*angrily*). If you weren't my friend, I'd thrash you.

JACK (*up stage*). Oh, that's all right Harry, dear fellow. I understand. Come on, me lud, and I'll help you cut your eye teeth, yes, and wisdom teeth, too. I'll show you sights that will make you think dear old Lunnon is a country village.
[*Exit, whistling.*]

MRS. H. Oh, Harry, what shall I do?

HALE. Do? Why, confound it all, you will have to go with him, I suppose. But break away as soon as you can, and come back.

MRS. H. Oh, Harry, I——

JACK (*outside*). Pembroke?

HALE. For the sake of a thousand, you know. (*He pushes her off at door in back, then comes down stage.*) Well, if this isn't the worst affair I was ever up against. To think of my dear little wife, always so shy and modest, togged out in male attire, and going off on a lark with Douglas. Gad, if it wasn't so much of a tragedy, it would be a screaming farce. (*Sits at table.*) And the worst of it all is, that I haven't the slightest idea how it is going to turn out. (*Picks up aunt's letter and scowls at it.*) Oh, Aunt Martha, if you had only done a little something for me. (*Opens letter.*) I suppose it is the same old song. My dear nephew—— Yes, but—— (*Stares at letter.*) This is different. (*Reads.*) "My dear nephew:—I have just heard from a friend of mine, lately returned from Chicago, that you married Miss Bessie Reynolds, some months ago. You naughty boy. Why didn't you write and tell me all about it? However, I will not scold you. I know your wife's folks well, and you have chosen wisely. Marriage is an incentive to work, and you should have settled down long ago. Even at this late day, let me congratulate you, and ask you to accept the enclosed check as a delayed wedding present. With best wishes for your success, I am your loving aunt, Martha." The check! (*Hastily takes a check from envelope.*) Ten thousand dollars. Oh, this is terrible. Why, oh, why didn't I read this letter sooner? I could have stood my fine. But

now? Now? (*Rises hastily.*) I must try and find them. (*Pauses.*) Gad, I cannot. I haven't any clothing. And yet I must know where they are. Well, here goes. (*He puts MRS. H.'s wrapper on over the dressing-gown.*) Now to settle this affair in short order. [*Exit hurriedly, at back.*]

Enter MRS. H., at door L. She comes in softly and peers about.

MRS. H. Harry! Harry! Why, he is not here. (*Crosses and peers off at R.*) Where can he have gone? I did as he told me. Got away and returned. I even slipped up the back way so as not to attract attention. But I cannot stand this any longer. I am going to change these things for dresses, come what may. [*Exit, R.*]

Enter JACK at door in back.

JACK. All is quiet. I wonder if they have given me the slip? I thought sure I'd find me lud here. It strikes me very forcibly that me lud is not me lud at all, but some woman masquerading in male attire. (*Pause.*) By Jove! Perhaps Hale has taken unto himself a wife, and is trying to keep it a secret from the club. Well, you can bet I'll find out, if I meet me lud again.

Enter MRS. H., at R.; she is still in her male attire.

MRS. H. (*aside*). I cannot find my wrapper. (*Notices JACK.*) Heavens, that man again.

JACK (*discovering her*). Why, hello, me lud. What possessed you to leave me in such an ungentlemanly fashion, just as I was about to show you some of the sights? Why, you acted as skittish as a woman.

MRS. H. (*spiritedly*). Nonsense. You, whom I hear are president of a bachelor's club, are not competent to judge of how any woman acts.

JACK. Now that was well said. But never mind that now. We will try and pass the time somehow until Harry returns. He must have gone out to finish his painting. Do you sing?

MRS. H. I—ere—no.

JACK. Too bad. I should imagine that you had a fine soprano voice. Well, then, let us sit here and discuss something. (*Both sit on a sofa down L.*) Feet for instance. What dainty ones you have, me lud. I don't believe you wear

larger than number two. (*He attempts to look at her feet, but she springs up with a scream. JACK, aside.*) I thought so. Now for some fun. (*Aloud.*) Excuse me, me lud, but do you know, you are such a pretty little fellow, that I feel just like kissing you.

(*He attempts to seize MRS. H., as HALE enters from back. He is still in the wrapper, which is torn.*)

HALE (*speaking off*). Now arrest me for a lunatic, will you, you big overgrown stuff? (*Notices JACK and MRS. H.*) Hey, there, take your hands off her —

JACK (*affecting surprise*). Her?

HALE. Yes, *her*. She is my wife.

JACK (*laughing*). Just as I supposed. But whatever induced you to play such a prank on me?

MRS. H. For the sake of a thousand.

JACK. The club fine, eh?

HALE. Yes. But thanks to Aunt Martha, who has relented at last, I can stand the fine. (*Offers JACK money.*) Here is your thousand. Now take it and leave us.

JACK (*taking money*). No, no. I'll do neither. The escapade was well worth it. (*Hands money to MRS. H.*) And please accept this as a wedding present from the club. As for leaving, Harry, I simply can't do it either. I have become very well acquainted with Lord Chauncey Pembroke in the last hour; now I want to become as well acquainted with Mrs. Harry Hale.

(*May close in with trio.*)

CURTAIN

Marinda's Beaus

A Pantomime for Three Males

CHARACTERS

MARINDA, *an old maid.*

SILAS OATCAKE, *a farmer.*

M. DE LA MONTMORENCY, *a dashing Frenchman.*

SCENE.—MARINDA'S *parlor.*

MARINDA enters at rise of curtain. She goes to a table down stage, discovers two letters, and reads them both, with many smirks and smiles. She has on large hat.

SILAS enters. He is made up as a grotesque farmer. Carries a huge bouquet of red roses, which he keeps concealed behind his back.

MARINDA discovers him, they grin at each other, and sit together on a sofa down L.

SILAS kisses her, after much trouble in trying to get under the hat.

MARINDA coyly removes her hat and goes up stage to fix her hair before a mirror.

SILAS takes up her hat, which she has left on the sofa, fondles it, and then places it on his own head.

MONTY enters. He is made up in exaggerated French style. He carries a bouquet of white roses. He notices the hat on SILAS's head, and not seeing MARINDA, slips quietly up behind SILAS, and bending over, kisses him.

SILAS springs to his feet, and the men are about to engage in a quarrel, when MARINDA comes between them. They then present their bouquets to her together; each managing to shove his bouquet in the other's face.

MARINDA places MONTY's bouquet in a vase on a stand down R., and lays SILAS's bouquet on stand beside it. Then she sits with MONTY on sofa.

SILAS discovers the bouquets, and taking MONTY's from the vase, throws it angrily on the floor, and substitutes his own.

MIRANDA suggests tea, and goes up stage to get pot and cups.

SILAS attempts to assist her, but tears the train of her dress. She angry at him, and he goes and sits on other end of sofa. The two lovers scowl at each other.

MARINDA returns with tea. MONTY attempts to pour for her, and spills tea in her lap. She shows anger at him, and turns to SILAS.

MONTY gets up angrily and noticing the bouquets, throws SILAS's on the floor and puts his own back in the vase.

MARINDA and SILAS take tea things back up stage.

MONTY is about to stamp on SILAS's bouquet when SILAS discovers him. He catches him by the seat of the trousers, and pulls him away, at the same time pulling out the seat of the trousers.

MARINDA runs to MONTY, consoles him and together they sit on the sofa.

SILAS, scowling, throws MONTY's bouquet on the floor, and is about to place the seat of trousers in the vase, when he discovers his mistake, and tossing it on the floor, he replaces his own bouquet in the vase.

MONTY and MARINDA billing and cooing on the sofa.

SILAS, noticing them, scowls, then goes to a piano and pretends to sing.

(Note.—A piano off stage should here play, “I'm Wearing My Heart Away for You.”)

MARINDA, charmed, turns from MONTY to listen. MONTY, angry, leaves sofa, and while SILAS, at end of song, comes down to MARINDA, MONTY once more changes the bouquets, then goes himself to piano and sings in pantomime.

(Piano off stage plays, “My Money Never Gives Out.”)

MARINDA, impressed, leaves SILAS and goes to MONTY.

SILAS discovers the substitution of bouquets and catching up his own, begins an angry quarrel with MONTY. SILAS slaps MONTY's face. MONTY points to two small toy swords that hang on the wall. SILAS nods his assent.

MONTY and SILAS engage in mock duel. SILAS getting the worst of it, when he suddenly throws down his sword, and goes

at MONTY with his fists. MONTY falls. SILAS wrenches his sword away and stabs him.

(Loud explosion off stage.)

MARINDA, who has been watching the affair from top of table, now faints, and falls off table into SILAS's arms.

SILAS stands fanning her with the toy sword, and with a satisfied grin on his face.

CURTAIN

1750-1912
A Midnight Fantasy

By Katherine E. Hunt

*Originally produced at Keith's Boston Bijou Theatre,
under the management of Josephine Clement, during the
week of September 9-14, 1912.*

1750-1912

CHARACTERS

(As originally cast)

THE PORTRAIT OF A COLONIAL BELLE (1750)	Gertrude Breen
THE PORTRAIT OF AN UP-TO-DATE BEAUTY (1912)	Betty Barnicoat

SCENE.—*A reception-room, not too much furnished. At back, c., two large portraits in gilt frames, one a Colonial girl in appropriate costume, powdered wig. She stands facing R., and holds an old-fashioned bouquet with a paper lace frill. She must also wear a fan, or have one in the scene. The other portrait is a girl in elaborate evening costume of the present day. She should face to L., that both portraits may be back to back. A row of electric lights should be concealed at the side of each picture.*

(At rising of the curtain, soft music, stage in total darkness, clock off stage chimes midnight slowly. At the same time the lights come on gradually (use dimmer) and as the last stroke dies away, the stage is brightly lighted, with the strips on inside each portrait. These are posed effectively. At the awakening of the first character, the music diminishes, and dies away very softly.)

1912 *(turning very slowly, and gradually toward audience, stretching gracefully, looking about in surprise and bewilderment).* Oooh! I'm so tired hanging up here all alone. How stiff I feel! Oh, gee!

(Slowly stretches again, still looking about her.)

1750 *(awakening slowly, and more demurely, facing audience).* At last! Midnight gives me power to stretch my weary limbs! *(Sighs primly.)* La! had I been forced to stand longer, methinks, indeed, I should have swooned.

(Repeats business of looking about, curiously.)

1912 (*surprised*). Listen, I thought I heard something.

(*Listens intently.*)

1750 (*same business*). I could believe a voice sounded close by.

1912. Some one spoke. I wonder —

1750 (*interrupting*). Surely, I was not mistaken —

(*Both step to the edge of their frames, first looking away, then toward each other. Each, at the first sight, starts back in surprise and fear. They turn back, about to reënter their frames, then turning away from each other slowly face out once more and step out, looking at each other all the while with intense curiosity. 1750 crosses to R., while 1912 examines her from head to foot, both well down stage.*)

1912 (*at L.*). Look who's here! Is the masquerade just over? My word! You're all dolled up. (*Crosses R.*)

1750 (*crossing L. with gesture of protest*). Masquerade? Nay, madam, you are mistaken. 'Tis many years since I did don a mask. (*Looks at 1912 with great interest.*) Pray tell me, to whom have I the honor of speaking? (*Makes low curtsey.*)

1912 (*watching her admiringly*). Classy, classy! I couldn't do that in a thousand years. (*Glances regretfully at her skirts.*) At least not until the styles change. (*With imitation of 1750.*) You are addressing, dear lady, the portrait of a skirt called Katherine Evangeline. (*Makes slight curtsey saucily.*) How do you like her?

1750 (*coming nearer 1912 and examining her daintily; stepping back with an air of satisfaction*). Verily, I like her much, both skirt and bodice, though (*doubtfully*) her words are passing strange. (*Turns slightly toward audience.*) It is long since I did hold converse with one of the gentler sex—(*mincingly*) as ours is so called—(*to 1912*) and I do find you different from those I knew in youth.

1912 (*turning a chair at R. about, and kneeling on it lightly, with one knee; to 1750, more seriously and incredulously*). Youth! Say, are you really old, or just kidding?

1750 (*drawing nearer, much perplexed*). Kidding? I do not understand.

1912. When I first caught a glimpse of you, I thought you

were only make believe, but now—well, now I'm beginning to see light. You look like the dearest old-fashioned valentine I ever saw.

1750 (*interrupting eagerly*). Valentines! Oh, do you like them? Why, only last Valentine's day I did receive the most beauteous one, all in white paper lace, with such a lovely wreath. (*Goes to extreme L., well down stage.*) La! it was passing sweet. (*Sighs fondly.*) And the verse hidden beneath the flowers—(*coily*) shall I repeat it for you?

1912 (*turning the chair about and dropping into it*). Shoot, Steve, I'm listening. (*Leans forward with interest.*)

1750 (*horrified, rushing over to 1912*). Nay, nay, there was nothing in it concerning shooting.

1912 (*at first surprised, then laughing*). I meant, go on with the verse.

1750 (*much relieved, returning to L., casting down eyes demurely, repeating verse slowly and shyly*). It said:

“The rose is red,
The violet's blue,
Sugar is sweet,
(*very coily*) And so are you.”

(*Shyly.*) What do you think of it?

1912 (*who, as the recital progresses, shows her disgust more and more plainly*). Punk!

1750 (*astonished*). Punk?

1912 (*with weariness*). Stale—passé. They've improved some since your day. Now I'll tell you the sort of valentine I sent Jim.

1750. Who is Jim?

1912 (*pointedly*). Jim isn't any more, as far as I'm concerned. He's a “used to be.”

1750 (*much perplexed*). Verily, your words are as a foreign tongue to me. I comprehend but little of their meaning, and yet they sound like English.

1912. It is, *believe me*, the most up-to-date kind. Besides, being a portrait, I frame up any kind of speech I like. You wouldn't call me really slangy, would you?

1750 (*inquiringly*). Is “slangy” something horrid?

1912 (*gravely*). I can plainly see we should save time if I could present you with a *Herald* dictionary.

1750 (*doubtfully*). Possibly, though (*mincingly*) I was con-

sidered a good speller in my day. But tell me of your valentine to Mr. Jim. (*Sits at L.*)

1912 (*sitting on arm of chair R.*). Oh, Jim and I were great chums. We went to everything together; just awfully good friends. And that was just the trouble. You see, Jimmie thought he knew me so well that, occasionally, when he framed up a date, he needn't make good. (*During this 1750 makes great business of perplexity over each unfamiliar expression.*) And the blow that finished me happened close onto February 22d, when friend James called me up to say, at the last minute, of course: "Awfully sorry, but I can't get up to that dance to-night."

1750. Called you up? You mean, don't you, called up to you?

1912. Oh, you goosie, I mean telephoned. He didn't come around to the house and shout it. We-ll, I was sorry, too (*with emphasis*),—for Jimmie. The next day, as I was trotting down Tremont Street, if I didn't just see the most suitable valentine looking at me in a stationer's window! Um! Um!

1750 (*eagerly*). Oh, do tell me. It must have been beautiful.

1912 (*smiling*). It was, believe me.

1750. *What* was the verse?

1912. Short, but — (*Imitates 1750.*) "La! It was passing sweet." Just a little kid at the top of a hill holding on to a sled with another youngster astride it. She was looking at him gravely, although by the expression of her face one could see her mind was quite made up, and underneath the picture it said (*very distinctly*): "I've decided to let you slide." Well, that's what I sent to Jimmie.

1750 (*who makes it plain she does not understand the point; doubtfully*). Truly it was nice, but forgive me if I like mine the best.

1912 (*smiling*). I supposed you would, dear. (*Leans forward, with a change of expression.*) But look, little Dresden China Lady, you haven't told me who you are yet. Of course I know you're a portrait and lovely, but (*eagerly*) whose? Whose?

1750 (*crossing hands demurely, in dreamy tones*). It was long, long ago, dear child, when I was eighteen and lovely. I walked about the long drawing-room on Beacon Hill, and I used to look through the tall windows to where the Mall lay green in the summer sunlight, or white with the winter snows.

When I was painted, his Excellency, General Washington (*bowing with stateliness over unfurled fan*), was President of the United States, and Martha Washington first lady of the land.

1912 (*who has been leaning forward with interest*). Gee! That sounds like United States history. Why, my paint doesn't seem dry yet when I hear you talk. (*Rubs finger over dress.*) I'm only eighteen, and I can't keep still a minute. We live on Beacon Street, too, but you're wrong about that place you called the Mall; that's Boston Common. I was painted last June when Bill Taft was trotting around the golf links at Beverly. I guess he's only president winters. Now, you see, I've told you my family history. It's up to you. What's yours?

1750 (*smiling at her*). I was a Katherine, too. Katherine Nowell.

1912 (*who, at the word Katherine, gives a start, now jumps to her feet and seizing the hands of 1750, draws her up also*). Katherine Nowell! Why, don't you see? You're the first Katherine of us all. Why, you're my great-grandmother!

(*They embrace, 1912 with vigor, 1750 half drawing back at her impetuosity. Both together.*)

1750. } Oh, my dear great-grandchild!

1912. } Dear great-grandmamma!

1912 (*still with arms about 1750; very eagerly*). Oh, my dear! To think I can have you for my very own! I'll tell you about such loads of things you never even dreamed of. Telephones and telegraphs, aeroplanes, suffragettes, phonographs and pianolas —

(*During this 1750 gazes at her with wide open eyes in wonder; then interrupts with little flurried gesture.*)

1750. It scarcely seems possible. I am quite pleasantly upset; and yet, dear child, I will believe you. (*1912 laughs.*) How much have things changed! Manners, customs, even speech is so different. But, though your words ring strangely (*smiling*), they are fair indeed. (*Goes over L. to chair.*) Wouldst like to hear of my girlhood days? (*1912 goes over and sits on arm of her chair; nods eagerly. 1750, dreamily.*) When I was young we said "Sir" to our papas, and "Madam" to our dear mammas. We sewed on our samplers each day, sitting in little high backed chairs, yea, and longing, when the

air was sweet and the day fair, to be out with the birds and the flowers. I do confess cross-stitch sorely tried me, it seemed so long and tedious to my unwilling fingers. (*Sighs wistfully.*)

1912 (*half aloud; sympathetically*). You poor little kid!

1750. We always attended church on the Sabbath, no matter what the weather, but, alack! we sometimes fell asleep during the sermon.

1912 (*laughing*). Times haven't changed much in that respect.

1750 (*patting her hand gently*). But we were gay, as well as grave, my dear. Many a time and oft have I sung, yea, and tread a measure with the gallants of my day.

1912 (*quickly*). Oh, do you suppose you could do it now? Please.

1750 (*hesitatingly*). I misdoubt,—it is so long ago,—and yet, perhaps (*shyly*) I can try. (*Sings and dances.*)

1912 (*enthusiastically*). Oh, lovely! lovely! Do it again, dear great-grandmamma!

1750 (*smiling, with gesture*). Nay, child, 'tis many years since last I did tread a measure. Do you not find it a fair enough dance?

1912 (*vigorously*). Well, rather. You ought to give an exhibition. That's some dance, take it from one who knows. It seems to me, though, if I had lived when you did, I should have died of paralysis. Gee, when I go to a dance and the fellows say they can't Boston, I just ring for Moxie. Why, the Boston's the greatest thing ever.

1750. I agree with you there; it is a goodly town.

1912. Snow again, grandmamma the great, I didn't get your drift.

1750. I do not understand.

1912. The town is all right, but I meant the dance. The aviation glide, the open Boston, and the Spanish Boston. Now there's the best of all!

1750. A modern dance. Oh, please do one for me.

1912. All right, dearie. Just hold down that chair and rubber.

1912 (*dances; at the close*). There. How's that?

1750 (*trying to be polite*). Fair, indeed, but violent!

1912 (*throwing her arms gaily about 1750 and giving her a hug*). Oh, my dear! Shan't we have larks together? I do hope we shall never be separated. Don't you? We'll talk and talk —

(Suddenly a cock crows off stage faintly—twice or thrice. Both stop short; their arms fall at their sides, their gaiety fades away.)

1750 (*at L., sadly*). Oh, my dear child! The day is at hand. We must go back.

(Each, as she speaks, moves slowly and reluctantly backward toward her frame.)

1912 (*stamping foot*). But I don't want to go back! I want to stay a long, long while. Oh, the night is young yet. I'm sure the cock was only dreaming.

(By this time both have stepped back into their frames.)

1750 (*more faintly*). Some other time, dear one, we shall speak again.

(Both assume first poses and settle into immobility. The lights grow gradually dimmer and dimmer; soft music.)

1912 (*faintly and with suggestion of drowsiness*). Good-night,—dear—great-grandmamma.

1750 (*barely above a whisper*). Good-night,—dear—great-grandchild.

(As the lights grow dim, and the portraits cease to speak, a clock is heard to chime very faintly, as though from a steeple in the distance. The music continues very softly, and when the stage is in complete darkness, the curtain falls.)

CURTAIN



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